



Testimony of
Lisa Garcia
Commissioner
New York City Department of Environmental Protection
before the
New York City Council
Committee on Environmental Protection, Resiliency, and Waterfronts
March 19, 2026

The Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2027, The Preliminary Capital Plan for Fiscal Years 2027-2030 and The Fiscal 2026 Preliminary Mayor’s Management Report

Good afternoon, Chair Gennaro and Members of the Committee.

I’m Lisa Garcia, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Environmental Protection. I’m joined today by our Chief Financial Officer Nerissa Moray, Acting Chief Operating Officer Tasos Georgelis, Deputy Commissioner for Public Affairs Beth DeFalco, and other members of our team.

While I may be new to this role, I am certainly not new to this city, and I am incredibly honored to be here with you all today. I was born in the Bronx and now call Brooklyn home, and I’ve always bragged about the New York City’s tap water. Since being appointed Commissioner, I’ve been amazed and impressed each day by what this agency accomplishes. DEP’s responsibilities are more massive in size and scope than many New Yorkers realize. DEP is essential to the health, safety, and future of our city. And while the breadth of the work this agency does is staggering, what makes it truly amazing is the people working behind the scenes – 24/7/365, rain or shine. I’m really excited to be part of this team.

Before coming to DEP, I served as Regional Administrator for EPA Region 2, covering New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and tribal nations. I’ve also worked in environmental journalism, environmental law, and in the Obama Administration. Throughout my career, my focus has been environmental justice, climate protection, and equity. That’s the perspective I bring to this role.

As Commissioner, my priorities are simple:

1. Keep our water clean and affordable.
2. Make our infrastructure stronger and more resilient.
3. Ensure every community shares in the benefits of our work — especially those historically overburdened by pollution and climate impacts.

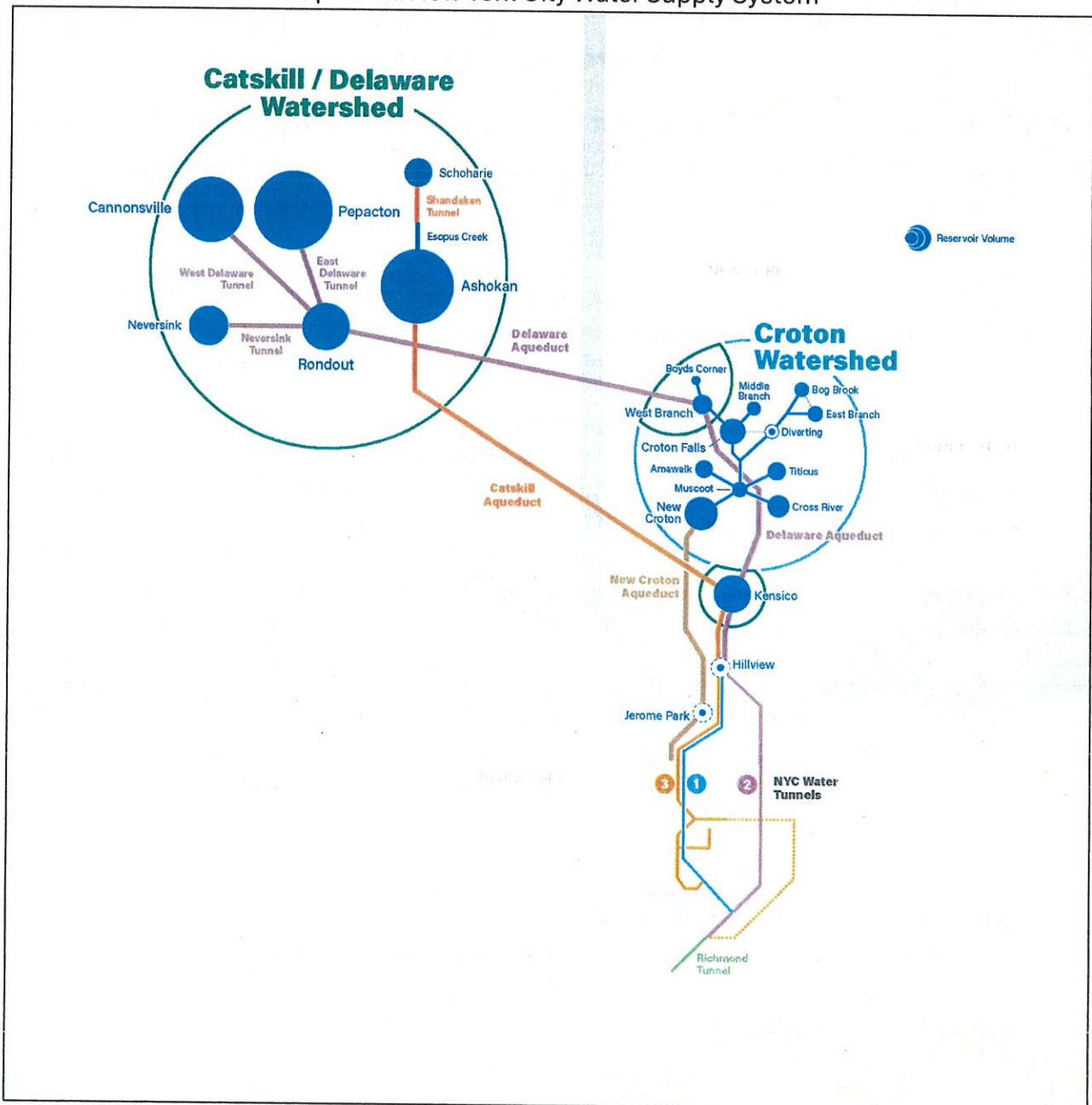
Today, I’ll discuss how our FY27 budget supports those goals.

What DEP Does — and Why It Matters

DEP’s work touches every New Yorker, every single day. We deliver the water you drink. We treat the wastewater you send down the drain. We manage stormwater. We protect air quality, reduce noise pollution, and enforce asbestos regulations.

As you all know, New York City’s drinking water is world-renowned. It comes from 19 reservoirs and three controlled lakes across a nearly 2,000-square-mile watershed in the Catskills and Hudson Valley — as far as 125 miles north of the city.

Map of the New York City Water Supply System





Because of decades of careful watershed protection, most of our water remains unfiltered — the largest unfiltered system in the country. That saves New Yorkers billions of dollars.

Roughly 1,000 of DEP's 5,700 employees work north of the city, around the watershed. Thousands more maintain the 7,000 miles of water mains and 7,500 miles of sewers that move water across the five boroughs. Every day, we treat 1.3 billion gallons of New Yorkers' wastewater at 14 facilities. Thanks to that work, the waters around our city are cleaner than they've been in 150 years.

Like many agencies, we face hiring challenges. As of the end of January, DEP has approximately 800 vacancies. Despite our hiring challenges, DEP continues to serve New Yorkers, and we rely on overtime when necessary. We are working hard to fill vacancies, but the rate has stayed stubbornly at 12% for three years. Coming into this role, it's a top priority for me to focus on hiring to improve our vacancy rate.

There are many challenges that contribute to the vacancy rate. In some cases, there is simply competition for hiring people with the skill sets we need for some of the specific titles that we have. In other cases, there are unique issues that we're working to solve.

For instance, the lack of a competitive police retirement plan for our DEP police force that protects the watershed makes recruitment and retention more difficult. Our officers retire with a civilian pension, not a police pension, and so they are not able to retire after 25 years of service like other police officers can. As a result, the recruits we train often quickly leave to go to other police departments. The State Legislature passed a bill last year to address this disparity, but unfortunately it was part of a package of bills that was vetoed by the Governor. We hope you'll support us in our push to pass that bill this year.

Our Budget — Why It's Different

DEP is funded almost entirely by our water and sewer rate payers. That means:

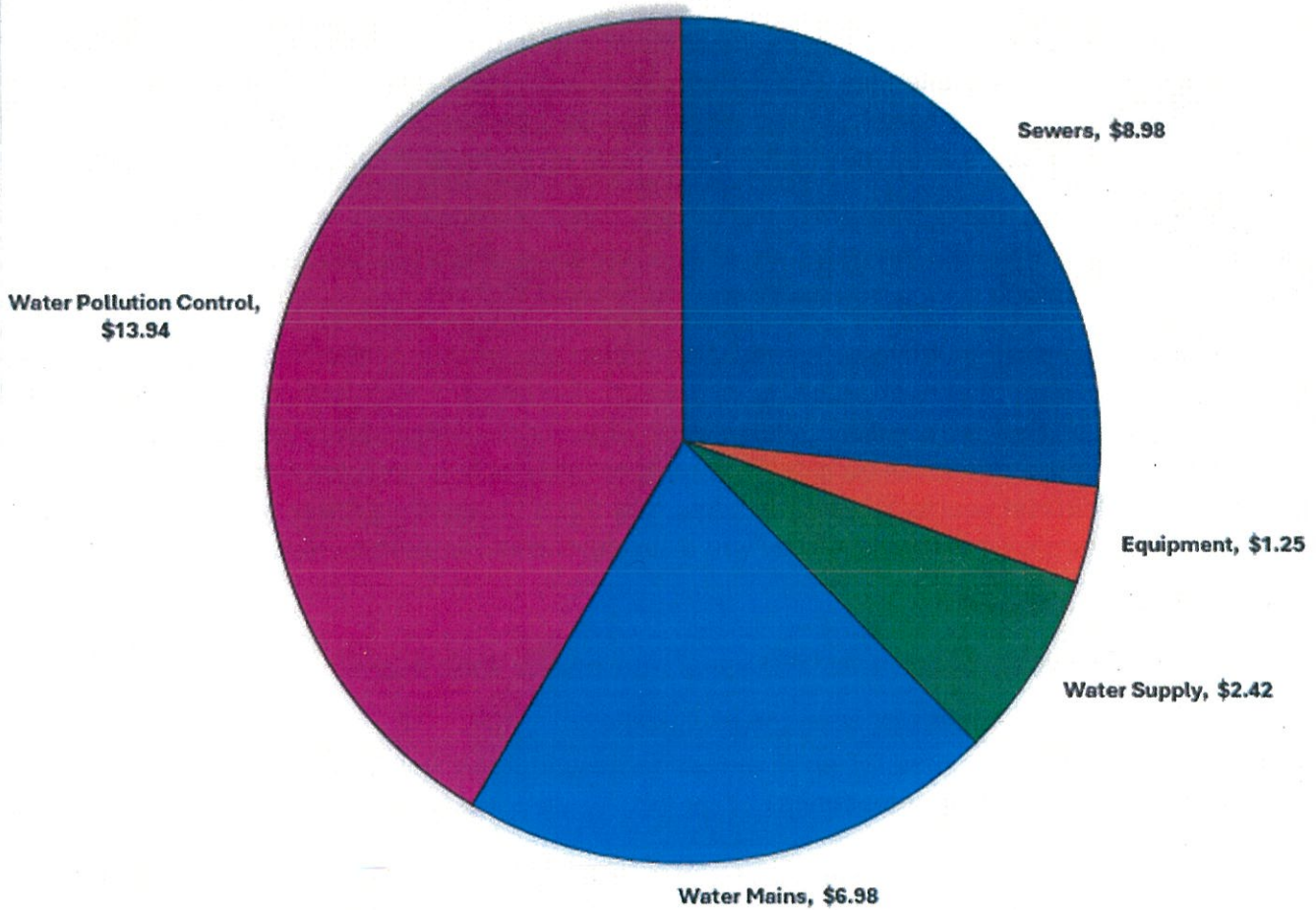
- We cannot get additional funds from other sources.
- Those funds can only be used for work related to the water and sewer systems.
- When our costs rise, ratepayers feel it.

Much of our spending is driven by mandates — federal, state, and regulatory requirements we must comply with to protect public health. These requirements must be balanced with all of our other priorities, including system expansion, modernization, and maintaining a state of good repair.

Our nearly \$34 billion 10-year capital plan is backed almost entirely by New York City ratepayer money. Over the next 10 years, DEP will invest \$2.4 billion to keep our drinking water safe, reliable and delicious. We'll spend almost \$7 billion to upgrade the water mains that bring it to your tap and curbside fire hydrants. We'll invest almost \$9 billion in sewer upgrades and expansions. And we'll spend almost \$14 billion in water pollution control projects that will keep New York City waters clean and beaches swimmable.

FY27 Preliminary CIP FY26-35 by Project Type

Total \$33.6B
\$'s in Billions



As of the FY27 Preliminary Budget, DEP's expense budget for FY27 totals \$1.7 billion. DEP's expense budget is predominantly funded by ratepayers: 92% is funded by water and sewer bills. This expense budget pays for operating costs relating to the water and sewer system.

Though we are mainly a utility, we are actually a hybrid agency, due to our environmental compliance enforcement of the air and noise code and oversight of hazardous material abatement. This enforcement work is funded by tax levy. As part of the FY27 November Plan, DEP received an additional 30 positions starting in FY26 to help support asbestos and idling enforcement. We are working to fill these new positions as quickly as possible.



1. Keep Our Water Clean and Affordable

A top priority for DEP right now is maintaining our Filtration Avoidance Determination — known as the FAD — for the Catskill/Delaware water supply system.

Most cities must filter surface drinking water. We don't have to because of the FAD. It's a waiver granted based on our decades of investment in our watershed protection. Maintaining the FAD saves billions of dollars in filtration plant construction and hundreds of millions in annual operating costs. Avoiding that cost helps keep NYC rates lower than the national average for large cities.

The FAD is up for renewal in 2027. We will begin negotiations with the state Department of Health this year. This renewal will not simply be a continuation of what we've been doing for the last few decades.

The climate has changed. Risks have changed. We are reassessing what's needed to protect the system going forward. We have convened a national Scientific Advisory Panel to evaluate emerging risks. We are drafting a public white paper outlining those risks and proposed program updates before negotiations begin.

But there is no question that maintaining the FAD is essential to affordability.

Speaking of affordability, our water remains one of the best bargains in New York City: it costs less than two cents per gallon, and we're committed to keeping it that way – because when people are able to pay their bills, we are able to continue investing in the system.

In FY25, we brought in \$4.75 billion, exceeding our expected revenue by more than \$400 million. This was one of the main drivers that allowed us to keep the water rate increase low for FY26. We're on pace to exceed our expected revenue again in FY26.

We know we're living in an increasingly expensive economy. DEP takes extensive measures to improve affordability for our ratepayers and help people pay their bills, even as more money is needed to maintain and upgrade our infrastructure.

That's why we've continued expanding customer assistance programs. They include:

- Our **Home Water Assistance Program** allows low-income households to save up to \$159 annually – approximately 13% on an average annual residential bill.
- The **Multi-Family Water Assistance Program** provides a \$250 per apartment bill credit for eligible affordable rentals each year.
- Our **Leak Forgiveness Program** provides generous forgiveness when customers experience a leak, so long as they fix the leak.
- And offer **discounted rates** for **eligible multi-family properties** that pre-pay their annual bills and maintain water efficiency measures.

But when people don't pay their bills, that cost is borne by all those who do. We strive to make it as easy as possible for all New Yorkers to pay their water bills, but we also understand that sometimes people go through a difficult time and may fall behind. To support these individuals, we have a number of relief programs in place.



- Our **Water Debt Assistance Program** allows qualified customers to defer their debt and avoid enforcement action.
- We've **created more flexible terms** for the Leak Forgiveness and Meter Bill Cap programs to allow more applications, and we continue to explore ways to improve these programs.
- We offer credits for **customers with medical exemptions** from service terminations to help them keep their certifications and avoid service termination.
- We recently **increased reimbursements** for customers who install their own meters.
- We also offer **extremely flexible payment agreements** that allow customers to pay off their debts over as long as 10 years. These agreements are personalized to meet each customer's needs. Anyone, regardless of financial status, is eligible.

To further our efforts to keep rates as low as possible for our customers, we are constantly looking for other ways to save money by operating as efficiently and effectively as possible.

We're modernizing operations — using drones, digital asset tracking, and AI to lower long-term costs. And we continue advocating for more state and federal aid so New York City receives its fair share of environmental funding, because municipality and population caps on grants and zero-interest financing result in New York City getting only a small portion of environmental funds available statewide.

2. Make Our Infrastructure Stronger and More Resilient

Climate change is here. The four most intense rainfall events in the past 50 years have all occurred since 2021. This fall we saw a storm that brought 1 inch of rain in 10 minutes — that's the equivalent of 6 inches of rain per hour.

Our infrastructure was simply not designed for that. New York City's water and sewer infrastructure is a century old system.

We know it requires a renewed, long-term commitment to modernization, and we have a responsibility to not pass a deteriorating or inadequate system to the next generation.

Strategic, sustained investment ensures clean, reliable water and sewer services for all New Yorkers and protects public health and the environment. Without proactive investment, the city faces expensive emergency responses, federal penalties for discharges, and escalating system failures.

We also know that investing in our infrastructure saves us money in long run. The \$34 billion capital plan includes major investments across all five boroughs and the watershed, including:

- \$620 million for the construction of the Gowanus CSO retention facility in Brooklyn.
- \$536 million for wastewater treatment upgrades in the South Bronx.
- \$556 million for wastewater treatment upgrades in Harlem.
- \$435 million for wastewater treatment upgrades in Port Richmond.
- \$2 billion – out of the \$2.8 billion in total funding – for the buildout of storm sewers in southeast Queens to address chronic flooding.



As we seek to modernize our infrastructure, we are not just tackling enormous projects with regional significance. We are also focused on projects that will have meaningful impacts in our communities at the block level. No project is too small.

Since July 2024, DEP has upgraded and modernized 3,273 catch basins. These are the grates located at the curb that drain rainwater or snow melt from streets to the sewer. We will spend \$1.5 million a year to continue these upgrades across the city. We will upgrade approximately 1,700 catch basins in FY26; the agency has already completed 1,176 of those upgrades since July.

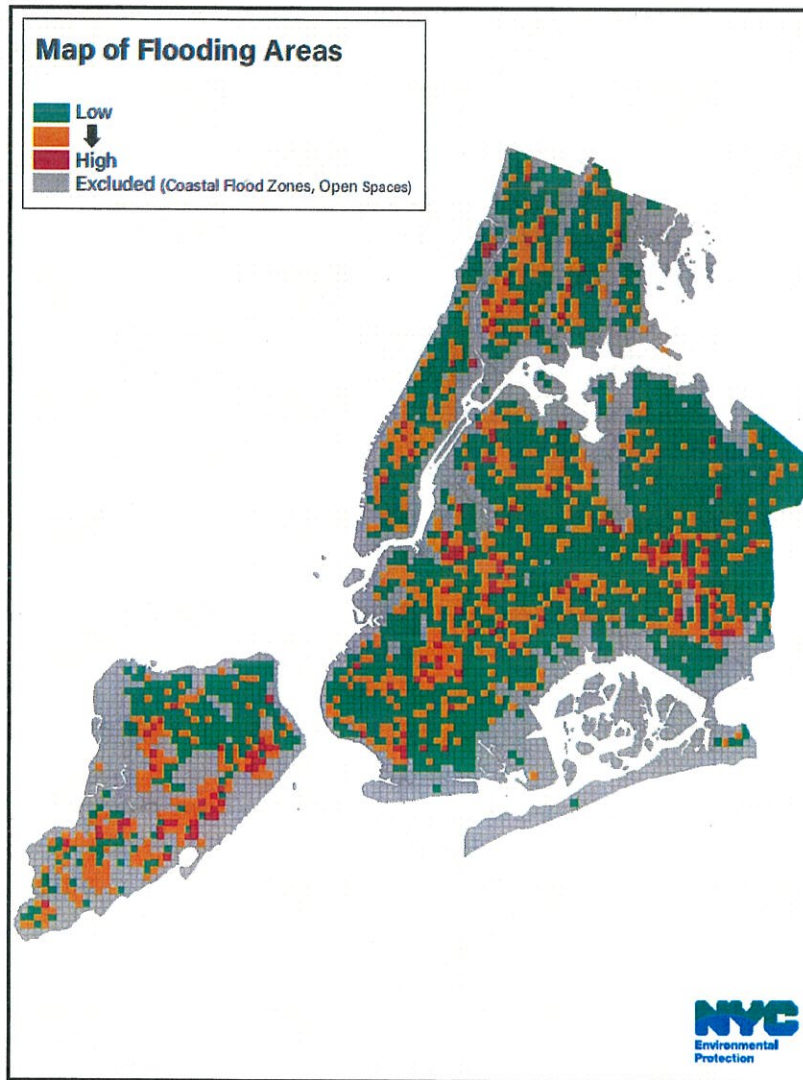
The upgrades pair improved catch basin grates in the road with slotted manhole covers on the sidewalk. If the catch basin grate becomes blocked by litter or leaves, the slotted manhole cover on the sidewalk provides an alternate route for stormwater to drain to the basin below. We have already installed 427 slotted manhole covers city-wide since 2024.

Our work extends north of the city, protecting our water supply in the face of a changing climate. The 10-year capital plan includes:

- \$1.1 billion towards a tunnel to add resiliency and critical redundancy for the Kensico Reservoir.
- \$1 billion towards the upgrade to the Ashokan Reservoir.
- \$351 million towards upgrades to the Hillview Reservoir.
- \$25 million towards upgrades to the Gilboa Dam at the Schoharie Reservoir.

We are also taking a smarter approach to stormwater planning — combining traditional sewer upgrades with nature-based solutions like rain gardens, Bluebelts, and cloudburst hubs. And we've identified 86 citywide priority flooding areas in our Stormwater Analysis, so that we can focus investments where flooding is most severe.

New Yorkers are demanding action on flooding. We hear them. And we are responding.



3. Ensure Every Community Shares in the Benefits

Equity is not a side initiative — it is central to our capital planning. We have major investments in all boroughs and in historically underserved communities. They include:

- \$113 million for significant sewer and stormwater upgrades as part of the Jewel Streets Neighborhood Plan on the Brooklyn-Queens border.
- \$335 million to upsize sewers and address decades-long, chronic flooding around Knickerbocker Avenue in Bushwick.
- We're also focusing our free, federally funded lead service line replacements in areas with some of the lowest income New Yorkers, starting with the South Bronx and expanding into Flushing, Queens.

We're directing resources toward communities that have been overlooked for decades. We know infrastructure is not just pipes and tunnels. It's about fairness. It's about health. It's about quality of life.



Looking Ahead

Looking ahead, we face real challenges — rising costs, workforce vacancies and extreme weather. But we also have one of the greatest water systems in North America — built by generations who planned ahead. It's now our responsibility to do the same.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to working closely with all of you and the Council to protect public health, strengthen resilience, and ensure every New Yorker benefits from our work.

My colleagues and I are now happy to answer your questions.



March 20, 2026

NYC-EJA Testimony on FY 2027 Preliminary Budget: Committee on Environmental Protection and Waterfronts

Greetings members of the Environmental Protection and Waterfronts Committee and thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of the inclusion of \$10 million in the FY 2027 budget for the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to develop a Master Plan for Rikers Island as a sustainable infrastructure hub for the City of New York.

Founded in 1991, NYC-EJA is a non-profit, 501(c)3 citywide membership network linking grassroots organizations from low-income communities of color in their struggle for environmental justice. NYC-EJA empowers its member organizations to advocate for improved environmental conditions and against inequitable environmental burdens by the coordination of campaigns to inform City and State policies. Through our efforts, member organizations coalesce around specific common issues that threaten the ability for low-income communities of color to thrive.

NYC-EJA is a founding member of the Renewable Rikers coalition, a movement to advance a green and restorative vision for Rikers Island and the environmental justice communities around it that coalesced after the announcement of the closure of the carceral facilities on the island during the De Blasio administration. Since then, the New York City Council has passed the Renewable Rikers Act, a package of three separate bills to both create a governance structure that would inform both the management of the land on the island and decision making on how the city would move the plan forward, and study potential uses that would support the city's reduced emission goals. More than five years after that key win however, little has been done to either ensure the closure of the facilities, which will stay open years after the city's initial 2027 deadline, or give city agencies the latitude to make clear decisions on what types of facilities will be sited on Rikers.

It is for this reason that it is imperative that the City Council use its power to secure the funding necessary to keep Renewable Rikers on track. [Int. 1038-2024](#), introduced by Council Member Sandy Nurse last session, would require the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) to submit a master plan for the redevelopment of Rikers Island. In line with this, NYC-EJA is asking for the Council to include \$10 million in the FY 2027 budget for DEP to lead this planning work necessary to get Renewable Rikers to the finish line. NYC-EJA's recent report, [A Reset for Renewable Rikers](#), confirms both the feasibility for renewable energy, wastewater treatment and compost processing on the island, but also its value to meeting the

City's decarbonization efforts and cost-saving potential to replacing key existing pieces of infrastructure that have met the end of their operational lifespan.

We look forward to working with Chair Gennaro and the rest of the Council to ensure that Renewable Rikers doesn't just stay a plan, but instead turns into a reality for the City of New York.



WATERFRONT ALLIANCE

2026 Policy Priorities

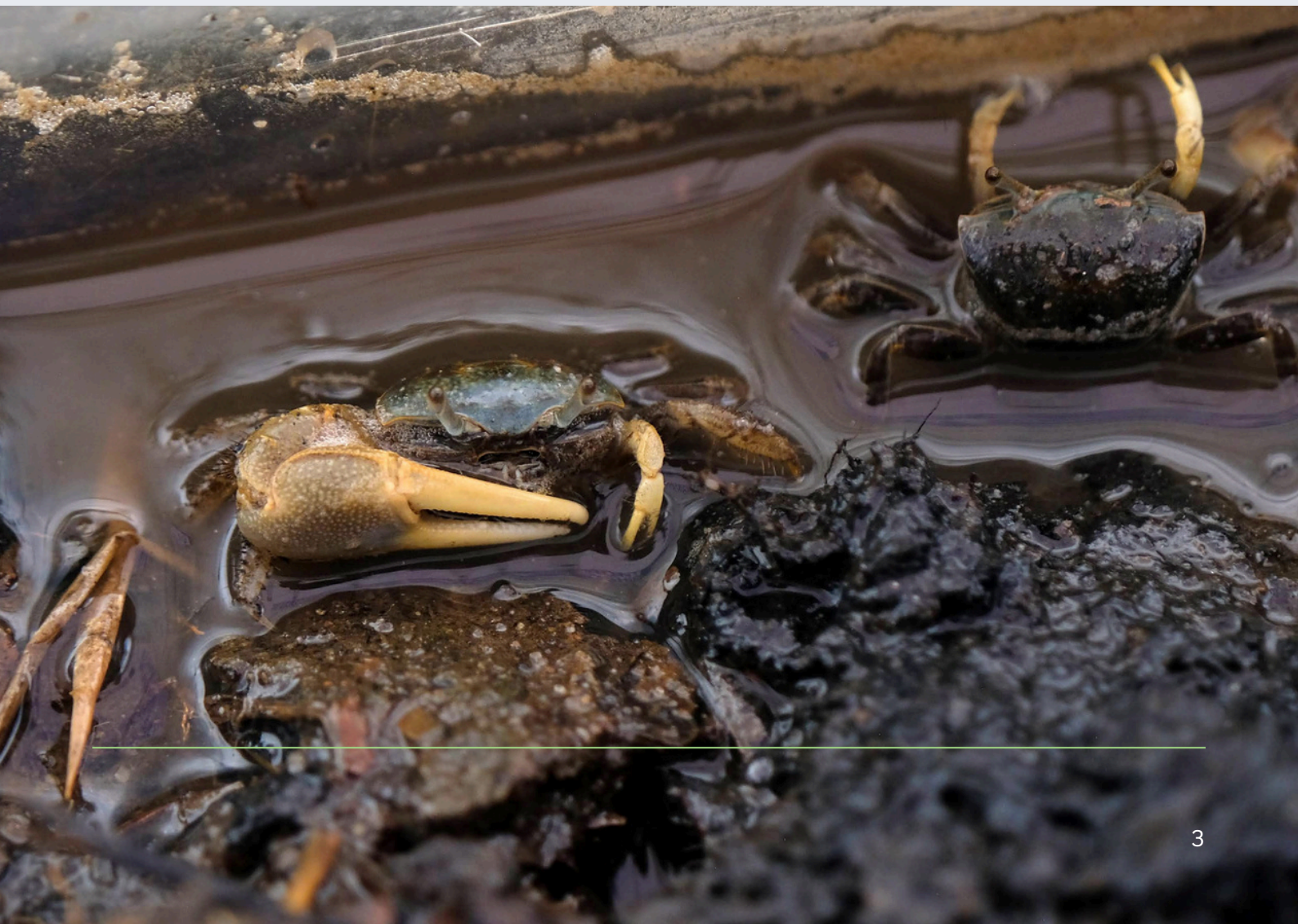


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Introduction

The Waterfront Alliance strives to protect and revitalize everything people love along waterfronts, coastlines, and beyond, and to energize others to do the same. The places where water meets land are our most treasured and special on the planet; they inspire our work. We achieve change through collaborations, education, and our own initiatives; by inspiring others to become changemakers. Unlike many organizations that focus on single solutions, we work together to achieve powerful outcomes for everyone. Waterfront Alliance, together with our more than 1,100 Alliance Partners, leads the way for thriving and resilient waterfronts, shorelines, and coastlines. We envision waterways and coastlines that are alive with commerce and recreation and reflect the vitality and diversity of the communities that surround them. We strive for communities and nations that are prepared for the climate crisis and committed to building excitement where water meets land.



Introduction

The 2026 Policy Platform is designed as a practical and inspiring roadmap for both the public and elected leaders who shape decisions across our region. It outlines clear priorities for the waterfronts, shorelines, and coastal communities of New York City, New York State, and New Jersey, recognizing that our waterways and climate risks transcend jurisdictional boundaries. The platform is built to encourage regional collaboration, align actions across governments, and support communities to advocate for the resilient future they deserve.

Environmental justice principles guide this platform by recognizing that some neighborhoods have historically faced greater environmental burdens and are more exposed to climate risks. Waterfront Alliance works to ensure that communities that have experienced past disinvestment receive fair access to resources, planning, and protection. Rather than standing as a separate priority, environmental justice serves as a lens across all our policy recommendations —informing leadership, planning, and investment so that solutions are community-driven, science-based, transparent, and equitable.



ACTION AREA: Leadership, Planning, & Governance

Support proactive leadership and collaboration across local, state, and federal government to advance science-based and comprehensive planning; impact-focused evaluation; and transparent, coordinated, and effective governance for waterfronts and coastlines.

Centralize the oversight and coordination of New York City’s waterfront planning and policy under the Mayor’s Office.

The Mayor’s Office should coordinate oversight of all city agencies with jurisdiction and operations along the City’s 520 miles of shoreline and prioritize resilience, maritime, and waterfront access. As the waterfront continues to be examined for recreation, housing, maritime, and coastal resilience, it’s critical that New York City centralize and coordinate waterfront expertise to support visions of blue highways, coastal protection, greenways, and modern port operations.

Establish a five-borough climate adaptation plan.

Implement New York City Local Law 122 and 149 to ensure coordinated, comprehensive, effective, and efficient action on climate resilience. It is imperative that New York City create a framework for identifying major climate threats, integrating environmental justice principles, and providing a sequenced roadmap for short-, medium-, and long-term adaptation actions and investments with buy-in across agencies and communities.

ACTION AREA:
Leadership,
Planning, &
Governance

Codify the Bureau of Coastal Resilience within the New York City government.

Introduce legislation in the New York City Council that establishes dedicated staff, clear authority, adequate budget, and a mandate for cross-agency delivery of waterfront adaptation and protection.

Complete the 10-year vision from the 2021 New York City Comprehensive Waterfront Plan.

Deliver equitable waterfront access, climate-resilient design standards, and inclusive planning processes that prioritize historically disinvested communities and integrate long-term adaptation strategies.

Develop a statewide climate resilience plan for New York State.

Establish an Office of Resilience and Chief Resilience Officer, similar to the model set by New Jersey, to lead the coordination and development of the statewide climate resilience plan. Additionally, pass [S.3590A/A.8088B](#) in New York, which would codify this office and plan into law.



Implement New Jersey Resilient Environments and Landscapes (NJ REAL) Rules.

Assist communities in New Jersey to build resilience for coastal and inland flooding. Additionally, continue and expand [Resilient NJ](#) programs to promote meaningful community and regional resilience protection across New Jersey.

ACTION AREA:
**Leadership,
Planning, &
Governance**

Fund and implement the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' New York-New Jersey Harbor and Tributaries Study (HATS).

Ensure comprehensive, multi-climate hazard projects across the harbor region. Advance projects at Oakwood Beach (Staten Island) and East Riser (New Jersey Meadowlands) through the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2026. Utilize nature-based features and non-structural approaches, prioritize robust community engagement, and use of best-available climate projections.

Codify WEDG[®] (Waterfront Edge Design Guidelines) standards in local and state land use policies.

Embedding WEDG will help ensure waterfront projects deliver climate resilience, ecological integrity, and equitable public access.

Streamline waterfront permitting.

Create a transparent, consolidated online system for local, state, and federal permitting with clear timelines, status tracking, and published performance metrics. Expand staffing and interagency coordination to accelerate approvals while maintaining rigorous environmental standards.



ACTION AREA: Funding & Investment

Support sustained, equitable, transparent, and dedicated funding streams and strategic financial partnerships that transform reactive and compartmentalized spending into proactive, integrated, community-driven investment.

Increase FY27 New York City climate budget.

Create a consistent, dedicated Resilience Infrastructure Fund for the purpose of risk reduction. Every \$1 invested in climate resilience saves \$13 in economic costs, damages, and cleanup. In addition to allocating to the highest climate-risk communities in the city, the budget should allocate \$10 million to the Bureau of Coastal Resilience, \$8 million for the [FiDi-Seaport Climate Resilience Plan](#), \$2 million for the [Strengthening Communities](#) program, fully fund permanent Cooling Centers, reallocate the \$315 million from the Water Rental Payment to resilience infrastructure projects, and restore 1% of the City budget for to the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation.

Develop and pursue innovative and self-sustaining funding strategies for climate resilience infrastructure across the region.

Direct revenues to environmental justice communities, prioritizing projects that deliver dual benefits of climate adaptation and emissions reductions. Examples of funding strategies include the passage of the Rain Ready NY Act ([S.4071A/A.7476A](#)), New York State's Cap & Invest program, the creation of a Resilience Finance Authority, and establishing Shoreline Protection Districts.

Raise Environmental Bond Act allocations for New York City from 35% to 40%.

Align with Justice40 and funding flood protection, green infrastructure, and housing retrofits in vulnerable neighborhoods.



ACTION AREA: Physical Infrastructure

Advance innovative nature-based and engineered physical infrastructure – including cleaner ports, diversified renewable energy systems, living shorelines, and innovation – that protects people, ecosystems, and the built environment from climate impacts, reduces emissions, and strengthens regional leadership in the blue and clean energy transition.



Break down barriers to public waterfront access.

Prioritize improving waterfront access in underserved communities, integrating climate resilient design, recreational opportunities, and connectivity to greenways.

Expand marine freight and blue highways.

Move more goods by water to reduce truck congestion, emissions, and roadway wear,. Activate underutilized working piers and incentivizing barge transport closer to final destinations to cut last-mile trucking. Integrate marine freight corridors with micro-mobility hubs and greenway networks.

ACTION AREA:
**Physical
Infrastructure**

Protect critical maritime infrastructure across the harbor region.

Preserve and invest in essential working-waterfront assets—including dry docks, maritime industrial land, fueling stations, and repair facilities—to maintain operational capacity and support the region’s blue economy. Ensure that any redevelopment or upgrades to these sites retain maritime uses, integrate climate-resilient design, and strengthen long-term waterfront functionality.

Utilize public spaces as multi-purpose resilience infrastructure.

Leverage parks, schools, and streets to absorb and attenuate water during extreme rainfall, tidal flooding, and other climate hazards. Pass and implement universal daylighting for street safety, and repurpose new open street spaces to increase permeable surfaces, reduce flooding, and provide safe, accessible public realms that double as resilience infrastructure.



Combine nature-based and engineered solutions to reduce growing flood risks.

Use approaches such as living shorelines, establishing bioswales, daylighting buried waterways, and flood gates, to protect people, ecosystems, and the built environment from increasing coastal and stormwater hazards.

Complete and connect waterfront greenways to expand access and protection.

Advance greenway expansion to create public waterfront access and coastal protection, with a focus on environmental justice neighborhoods that have been historically cut off from their waterfronts.

ACTION AREA: Physical Infrastructure



Scale resilience retrofits and relocation for flood-prone homes.

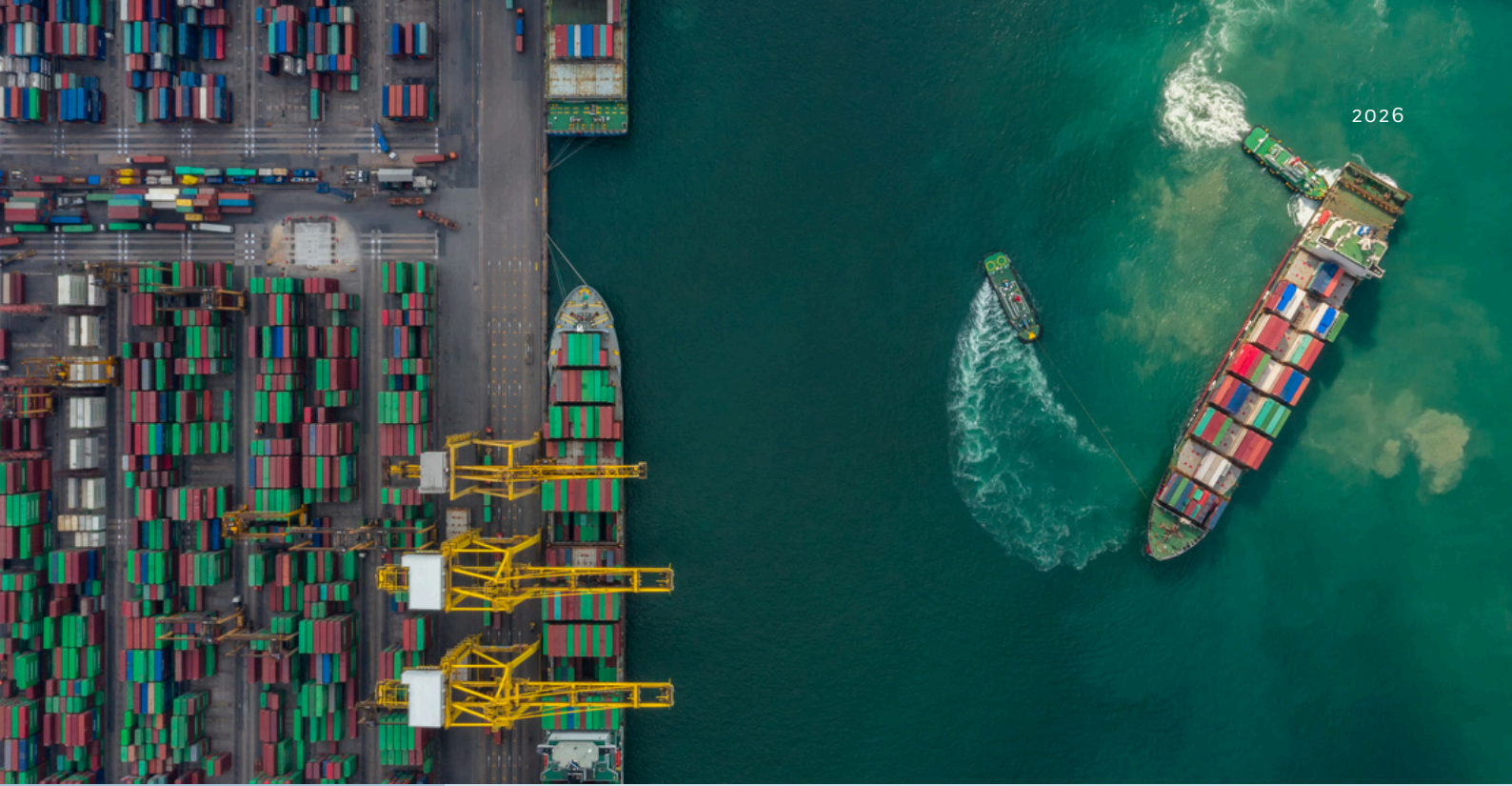
Prioritize subsidized housing and historically disinvested communities by providing strong financial incentives, as well as thoughtful education and counseling services. Relocation or buyout programs must follow the six [Rainproof NYC principles](#), to support fair, informed, and community-centered decision making.

Establish permanent resilience hubs and cooling centers in community facilities.

Create year-round resilience hubs and cooling centers in libraries and community centers. Codify permanent cooling center programs and integrate them into city emergency plans.

Retrofit and develop ports for climate resilience and offshore wind development.

Upgrade port facilities to support climate resilient operations and offshore wind staging, ensuring community benefits and WEDG® compliance. Policies require transparent community engagement, honor community led plans, local hiring commitments, and benefit agreements.



WATERFRONT ALLIANCE
POLICY PLATFORM

ACTION AREA: Physical Infrastructure

Modernize and electrify maritime operations.

Invest in shore power, charging stations, and zero-emission vessels, secure funding and workforce training to support a clean, efficient, and resilient maritime sector.

Accelerate offshore wind's deployment through strategic infrastructure and federal leadership.

Invest in resilient port infrastructure, strengthen transmission, distribution grids, and substations to support long-term clean energy growth. Advocate for strong federal leadership, including consistent permitting guidance, stable policy signals, and supportive regulatory frameworks, to advance offshore wind development across the region.

Support New York-New Jersey Harbor Deepening and maximize beneficial reuse of dredged material.

Secure federal and Port Authority of New York-New Jersey funding to maintain the port as the East Coast's leading container shipping port and sustain the region's maritime and working waterfront jobs, Ensure the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers meets its commitment to a minimum of 70% beneficial reuse of dredged material, prioritizing local reuse in New York Harbor for restoration and climate-adaptation projects across New York, New Jersey, and New York City.

ACTION AREA: Social Infrastructure

Support the expansion of equitable access to the waterfront, climate education, and workforce opportunities that empower residents to connect with, steward, and benefit from resilient waterfronts and coastlines in their neighborhoods.



ACTION AREA:
Social
Infrastructure

Improve emergency preparedness communication in New York City.

Develop a comprehensive community strategy through a single city agency, such as NYCEM. Expand [FloodNet NYC](#), NYC's street-level flood sensor network and integrate emergency management materials into infrastructure projects. Additionally, develop multilingual preparedness programs and resources, to raise awareness for flooding and heat safety; connect NYC311 reporting to emergency resources and expanding access to concise, multilingual alerts.

Expand New York City ferry service across the harbor region.

Prioritize service expansion in transit deserts communities and pilot an electric ferry by investing in charging infrastructure at the Brooklyn Navy Yard Homeport. Ferries provide reliable, redundant transportation during extreme weather and emergencies, reduce road congestion, and support a sustainable maritime economy, while improving connections to jobs across the region.



Classify extreme heat as a natural disaster to unlock federal resources and protections.

Implement [Intro 0994](#) to set safe indoor temperature limits, expand [HEAP Cooling Assistance](#), and increase tree canopy coverage in environmental justice neighborhoods to reduce heat risk and protect heat vulnerable residents.

ACTION AREA:
Social
Infrastructure

Create green and blue career pathways in maritime, climate resilience, and offshore wind sectors.

Prioritize opportunities for EJ communities by partnering with unions, educational institutions, and industry leaders to create apprenticeships and training programs with pathways to careers. Local and state governments must prepare the workforce for rapidly expanding climate and maritime sectors by investing in accessible, skill-building programs that lead directly to long-term careers.

Mandate climate education in New York schools.

Advance [S.2430/A.1984](#) to require climate education statewide and invest in educator and teacher training and opportunities to link curricula to green and blue career pathways.



Require swim safety education statewide.

Advance [A.1080](#) to mandate swim-safety instruction and standardize drowning prevention resources. Implement New York City's study for the Junior Lifeguard Corps and continue to expand community swimming programs in underserved areas.

Fight misinformation about offshore wind through public education.

Launch an education campaign that accurately communicates the benefits and risks of offshore wind energy, supporting informed public understanding and constructive community dialogue.

Get in touch



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PUBLIC TESTIMONY OF WATERFRONT ALLIANCE

March 19, 2026

New York City Council Committee on Environmental Protection and Waterfronts Preliminary Budgetary Hearing

Submitted by Tyler Taba, Director of Policy and Government Affairs, Waterfront Alliance

My name is Tyler Taba, and I am the director of policy and government affairs at the Waterfront Alliance. Waterfront Alliance is the leader in public waterfront access, climate resilience, waterfront revitalization and economic vitality for the New York-New Jersey Harbor region.

The Waterfront Alliance is committed to sustainability and to mitigating the effects of climate change across the region's hundreds of miles of waterfront. We convene the Rise to Resilience Coalition of 100+ groups advocating for policy related to climate resilience, we bring education focused on climate resilience to students in NYC DOE schools through our Estuary Explorers program, and we run the national Waterfront Edge Design Guidelines (WEDG®) program for promoting innovation in climate design.

Thank you, Chair Gennaro, and members of the Committee, for the opportunity to submit testimony. I am grateful to submit testimony today in favor of dedicated funding and long-term planning for climate resilience, public waterfront access, and working waterfronts for New York City.

New Yorkers have witnessed, firsthand, the risks and impacts the climate crisis poses to our neighbors, infrastructure, and natural resources. We see the projections that experts at the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and our own New York Panel on Climate Change (NPCC), have laid out for us. More importantly, we see the impacts that are already here today. Flooding events are the most common climate-related hazard across New York City.¹ The city has also experienced other types of extreme weather occurrences, including over 40 extreme heat events in the last 10 years alone.²

¹ Rebuild by Design. *Atlas of Disaster: New York*. <https://rebuildbydesign.org/atlas-of-disaster-new-york-state/>

² NYC Emergency Management. *Hazard History & Consequences Tool*. <https://nychazardhistory.com/PublicSearch.aspx>



That means these climate risks and impacts are no longer abstract or projections of the future. They are tangible, measurable, and while not avoidable anymore, we know there are critical policies, plans, and funds that can reduce the burden of impact on New Yorkers. In order to reduce the city's vulnerability to the climate crisis, Waterfront Alliance advocates for direct and bold action immediately. That starts with making dedicated and critical investments in the FY27 New York City Budget toward a more resilient, equitable future.

Climate resilience involves repairing, maintaining, and innovating our physical infrastructure, such as our roads, bridges, schools, and parks. It also involves expanding technical staffing capacity within the several operational city agencies who oversee critical infrastructure. It also requires expanding capacity for awareness and educational programs within those agencies. These challenges cannot be addressed meaningfully without explicit line items in the City's budget.

New York City has historically funded climate and waterfront projects in partnership with federal agencies. The budgets for climate and waterfront projects at these agencies have faced significant rollbacks. That absence is not an excuse for the City to now roll back or minimize its work to promote resilient waterfronts and shorelines.

Unfortunately, the estimated financial costs of climate impacts will continue to burden New Yorkers. Studies estimate that the costs of climate change across New York will rise to \$10 billion annually by 2050.³ And yet, the costs of inaction are far greater.

The investments we make today, from the City Council and City Hall, will determine the future level of damage, loss of life, and well-being for New York City's residents, infrastructure, and natural resources. Our testimony reflects the critical investments needed for climate resilience, and adaptation, preparedness, public waterfront access, and the working waterfront—all of which are embedded in the daily lives of millions of New Yorkers.

Climate Resilience, Adaptation, and Preparedness

Starting with the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), which is responsible for critical drinking water, stormwater, and coastal infrastructure across New York

³ Rebuild by Design. *Resilient Infrastructure for New York State*. <https://rebuildbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/1329.pdf>



City. To support DEP's capital projects, and the often-overlooked operations and maintenance of these projects, **Waterfront Alliance strongly supports a \$2 billion budget for DEP.**

A major concern in the FY27 budget is related to the water rental payment charge. As Chair Gennaro has called out for years, the water rental payment is a regressive tax that originated when there was substantial debt related to the water and sewage systems. The debt has since been rectified, making this charge unnecessary. The rental payment takes funds generated by water ratepayers and transfers them to the City's general fund. These funds are critical for supporting investments in water infrastructure. **Waterfront Alliance urges the City Council to reject the water rental payment in the FY27 budget.** A more equitable route would be to restructure water utility rates to consider the contribution to stormwater runoff. Currently, water rates do not capture the permeability or impermeability of surfaces. By categorizing stormwater runoffs separately, the City will benefit from designated revenues for stormwater management, as well as the establishment of an incentive programs for green infrastructure and other strategies that reduce flooding. In fact, the New York City Independent Budget Office released a research report on November 2023, which estimated that the City could receive revenue ranging from \$266 million to \$892 million per year from a similar structure as other major U.S. cities like Seattle, Baltimore, and Philadelphia.⁴ If the rental payment is not rejected by the City Council and Mayor, we strongly recommend reallocating resources to support DEP's climate resilience portfolio.

We applaud the formation of a new Bureau of Coastal Resilience within DEP, as part of commitments made in the 2023 PlaNYC, New York City's long-term climate plan. Waterfront Alliance encourages the City Council to introduce legislation to codify the Bureau's role in leading the governance and planning of coastal resilience for the City. Unfortunately, since Bureau was established, it has sorely lacked the staffing resources needed to fulfill its mandate. **\$10 million for the Bureau of Coastal Resilience is among Waterfront Alliance's top budget priorities in FY27.** We recommend allocating \$5 million to support 45 new staff positions and \$5 million to develop a compound flood model and other long-term planning efforts.

As it relates to city agency staffing, Waterfront Alliance, as an advisory member of the Play Fair Coalition, strongly supports restoring and increasing funding for the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (NYC Parks). Over the last couple of budgets, NYC Parks

⁴ New York City Independent Budget Office (November 2023). *Raindrops Keep Falling On New York: Potential Implications Of a Stormwater Fee In New York City*. <https://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/raindrops-keep-falling-on-new-york-potential-implications-of-a-stormwater-fee-in-new-york-city-november-2023.pdf>



has faced cuts resulting in the loss of nearly 800 jobs and canceled programs. Nearly 30% of the total land managed by NYC Parks includes waterfront parks, beaches, and boardwalks. About 150 miles of the City's entire 520 miles of shoreline are covered by NYC Parks. Parks are a critical first line of defense for flooding and extreme heat risks. **The FY27 preliminary budget for NYC Parks is \$33 million less than the FY26 Adopted Budget and does not provide critical restorations after four years of cuts.** The proposed budget eliminates 100 NYC Parks staffing lines as a condition of the end to the hiring freeze. Following 600 staffing lines cut since 2023 under the Adams Administration, these cumulative losses limit the agency's ability to rebuild its workforce. The FY27 preliminary budget also fails to safeguard the 276 Parks workers set to lose their jobs at the end of this fiscal year since they are dependent on annual one-shot City Council funding. These positions must be baselined to ensure stability and consistent service. **Overall, the preliminary budget maintains an underinvestment in parks rather than the path toward 1% of the city budget.**

Waterfront Alliance has been a consistent and leading voice on the need for comprehensive climate resilience and adaptation planning. In 2021, the City Council passed historic legislation (Local Law 122) requiring the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice (MOCEJ) to conduct a five-borough climate adaptation plan. Local Law 122 has the potential to be the backbone for New York City's climate solutions, but it was never fully realized in the prior administration. Thanks to the leadership of Chair Gennaro and many Council members, a new law (Local Law 142) now requires the City to integrate the five-borough adaptation plan into the PlaNYC cycle. **Waterfront Alliance supports fully funding MOCEJ to properly conduct and complete the five-borough adaptation plan.** Getting this right from the start is critical. To support the planning process, we recommend establishing a Climate Adaptation Working Group to convene MOCEJ, the NPCC, city agencies, and advocacy partners. We also ask this Committee to hold the Mayor's Office accountable to comply with the law. As the plan develops, we hope to partner with the City Council to create an established capital funding line for climate resilience projects the five-borough adaptation plan could support.

Moving from staffing to projects, Waterfront Alliance strongly supports allocating **long-term funding for the City's current portfolio of climate resilience projects, such as the Cloudburst Management and Bluebelt program, and expanded funding for new initiatives like the Resilient Acquisitions program.** We applaud the 2023 expansion of Cloudburst Management, which invested \$390 million across four neighborhoods. Future expansion of the program should not exclude at-risk communities with high water tables. Additionally, we recommend expansion of DEP's Bluebelt program and are pleased to see new projects at Kissena Park and Prospect Park. Lastly, the Resilient Acquisitions program should leverage any eligible funding from New York State's \$250 million investment in the



Environmental Bond Act. It's critical for the City to identify all sources of funding to support the necessary education, mental health and counseling services, and financial assistance components of a permanent buyout program. These programs can only be successful with committed and dedicated funding.

Along those lines, the City must commit funding to complete the design phase of the Lower Manhattan Coastal Resiliency (LMCR) portfolio. Major sections, like the East Side Coastal Resiliency, South Battery Park City Resiliency, and Brooklyn Bridge-Montgomery Coastal Resiliency are operational, yet a cornerstone of the portfolio, the FiDi-Seaport Climate Resilience Master Plan, is still missing. The FiDi-Seaport plan is a complex and comprehensive strategy designed that would create a seamless connection with the rest of the LMCR projects.

Waterfront Alliance supports allocating \$7.5 million to advance design for the FiDi-Seaport Climate Resilience Master Plan and encourages the City to work with Manhattan CB1 and other local partners to integrate community feedback. By continuing to advance design for this project, the City can begin to transition its resources and expertise toward implementing coastal protections for more flood-vulnerable, frontline neighborhoods across the five boroughs.

Preparedness for the impacts of the climate crisis is an often overlooked, but equally important, piece of the climate resilience and adaptation puzzle. New York City Emergency Management (NYCEM) hosts the Strengthening Communities program, which is a strategic grant initiative that provides community- and faith-based coalitions with the funding to build local emergency response plans. Several of our Alliance partners have successfully participated in this program and are now an integral part of the City's response to climate disasters. **Waterfront Alliance recommends funding the Strengthening Communities Program at \$2 million in FY27 budget to continue scaling the program across neighborhood networks.** Participating networks move through a thorough process to map neighborhood resources, conduct needs assessments, and formalize communication strategies, ensuring they have the operational capacity to function during a crisis.

Climate resilience and adaptation extend beyond coastal and inland flooding. Extreme heat poses a significant threat to public health and safety in New York City. As climate change progresses, the city is experiencing more frequent, intense, and prolonged heat waves. These extreme heat events can lead to severe health issues, including dehydration, heat exhaustion and stroke, and even death. Vulnerable populations, such as the elderly, individuals with pre-existing health conditions, and those living in poorly ventilated housing, are particularly at risk. In fact, extreme heat is the leading cause of weather-related fatalities in the United States, and



New York City sees an average of 520 heat-related deaths annually⁵. Addressing this issue is critical to reducing health risks and improving the well-being of all New Yorkers. **We encourage the City Council to allocate \$1.2 million for cooling center funding in the Mayor's proposed budget for Local Law 128 of 2025, which codifies the city's Cooling Center program for heat emergencies.** Cooling Centers are a critical emergency resource. As such, the program should be protected from cuts and provided with additional funding to expand operating hours beyond regular schedules on activation days. Analysis by the Independent Budget Office shows Cooling Center hours drop off significantly on weekday evenings and weekends, leaving heat vulnerable communities with no lifeline.

Public Waterfront Access

New York City's waterfront is a vital resource that provides open space for recreation, relaxation, and reflection. However, there are significant disparities in public access to these spaces. Over 800,000 New Yorkers live within a half mile of the waterfront but lack a public access point. Communities with limited or cut-off access to the waterfront are often lower income and communities of color. Expanding access to waterfront open spaces is not only a matter of equity but also essential for promoting public health, environmental awareness, and community well-being.

To address these disparities and enhance waterfront access, it is crucial to support funding opportunities that can execute commitments made in the 2021 NYC Comprehensive Waterfront Plan. This plan outlines a 10-year vision to create a more equitable, resilient, and healthy waterfront for all New Yorkers. By investing in this plan, the City can prioritize underserved communities, improve climate resiliency, and support economic opportunities along the waterfront. With additional funding, this plan will enable the city to implement strategies that connect and unify public spaces, enhance recreational opportunities, and improve the quality of life for all its residents. Ensuring adequate funding for this comprehensive plan is essential for the long-term sustainability and inclusivity of New York City's waterfront.

For years, Waterfront Alliance has worked with South Bronx Unite to support the Mott Haven-Port Morris Waterfront Plan. South Bronx Unite developed a \$20 million EPA Community Change Grant proposal that laid out a comprehensive roadmap for implementing priority elements of the Waterfront Plan, including the redevelopment and activation of the East 132nd

⁵ Mayor's Office of Climate & Environmental Justice – Extreme Heat Adaptation, [Extreme Heat - NYC Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice](#)



Street Pier. While the proposal was completed and submitted, the entire federal funding program was ultimately canceled, halting a critical opportunity to fully realize this community-led vision. Just a month ago, [the City was awarded \\$1.03 million from Congresswomen Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez](#) to jumpstart work on the 132nd Street Pier. This investment represents an important first step, but it covers only a portion of the overall funding needed to complete the project at the scale envisioned by the community.

We call on the City to support the completion of the 132nd Street Pier Project, as a part of the Mott Haven-Port Morris and NYC Comprehensive Waterfront Plan. This project would transform an underutilized city-owned street-end into a multifunctional space that provides waterfront access and climate resilience in an environmental justice community. We encourage the City Council to support the completion of pier under leadership and partnership with MOCEJ.

Additionally, **we are a proud member of the Water Safety Coalition and support investments in initiatives such as land-based water safety education, "Second Grade" swim programs, free swim lessons for all ages, and lifeguard training and certification across New York City's five boroughs.** These efforts aim to enhance water safety education and create a robust pipeline of trained lifeguards.

Maritime, Ports, and the Working Waterfront

The New York Harbor region faces significant challenges related to waterfront and industrial land use. As urban development pressures increase, valuable industrial waterfront areas are at risk of being repurposed. This threatens the maritime sector, which is crucial for regional economic competitiveness, job creation, and sustainability. The limited availability of industrial waterfront land exacerbates these challenges. Protecting these areas is essential to maintaining the economic vitality of the harbor region, reducing truck congestion, and minimizing greenhouse gas emissions by facilitating efficient transport of goods.

Waterfront Alliance advocates for securing funding to conduct a comprehensive, long-term maritime study of New York City's waterfront. This study is crucial for making informed land use decisions and ensuring the sustainable development of maritime spaces. The analysis should project at least 50 years into the future and consider factors such as port capacity, supply chain flexibility, truck congestion, emissions, and climate resilience. Waterfront Alliance believes that such a study will provide the necessary insights to protect and enhance the maritime sector, ensuring it thrives and supports the region's economy.



Waterfront Alliance fully supports the development of Blue Highways as a sustainable solution for urban freight transportation. By leveraging the city's extensive network of waterways, Blue Highways can enhance economic resilience by diversifying transportation modes and creating new jobs in port operations and related industries. The Brooklyn Marine Terminal, for example, would be an ideal hub for Blue Highways. To support this transformation, the U.S. Department of Transportation's Maritime Administration (MARAD) has committed \$163.8 million in federal funding. The City has also committed an initial \$80 million investment to stabilize and repair Piers 7, 8, and 10. Waterfront Alliance strongly advocates for these commitments to be realized and for the vision of Blue Highways to come to New York City.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and for your support to ensure New Yorkers are protected and prepared from the impacts of the climate crisis, enjoy public waterfront access, and rely on a healthy working waterfront. Waterfront Alliance is looking forward to partnering with the City Council, specifically this Committee, to advance all these recommendations and initiatives.

RISE TO RESILIENCE

OUR COMMUNITIES, OUR FUTURE

PUBLIC TESTIMONY OF THE RISE TO RESILIENCE COALITION

March 19, 2026

New York City Council Committee On Environmental Protection And Waterfronts Preliminary Budgetary Hearing

Submitted by Maité Duquela, Climate Policy Fellow, Waterfront Alliance

My name is Maité Duquela, and I am the Climate Policy Fellow at Waterfront Alliance. Thank you, Chair Gennaro, and members of the Environmental Protection and Waterfront Committee, for the opportunity to submit testimony. I am testifying today on behalf of the [Rise to Resilience \(R2R\) Coalition](#), specifically in support of our budget priorities for climate resilience solutions for New York City. R2R is a campaign and coalition, comprised of more than 100 organizations representing residents; leaders in business, labor and justice; volunteers; scientists; environmental advocates; and design professionals collectively calling on our federal, state, and local governments to make climate resilience an urgent priority.

The Rise to Resilience Coalition strongly urges the City's budget to reflect the reality that climate change is already here, affecting millions of residents today.

New York City has witnessed, firsthand, the risks and impacts that climate change poses to our residents, infrastructure, and natural resources. Flooding events are the most common climate-related hazard across the city¹ and nearly 14 percent of New Yorkers (about 1.3 million people) live within or adjacent to the 100-year floodplain.² Moreover, nearly 78 percent (about 7.2 million New Yorkers) have an urban heat index (UHI) of 8°F or higher, meaning that people in those census tracts feel at least 8°F more heat because of the local built environment.³

Climate risks and impacts are no longer abstract or projections of the future. They are tangible, measurable, and while not avoidable anymore, we know there are critical policies, plans, and funds that can reduce the burden of impact on New Yorkers. In order to reduce the city's vulnerability to climate change, direct and bold action must be taken immediately. That starts with making critical investments in the City Budget toward a more resilient, equitable future.

¹ Rebuild by Design. *Atlas of Disaster: New York*. <https://rebuildbydesign.org/atlas-of-disaster-new-york-state/>

² Rebuild by Design. *Who Lives in the NYC Floodplain*. <https://rebuildbydesign.org/reports/who-lives-in-the-nyc-floodplain-2/>

³ Climate Central (July 2023) *Urban Heat Spots*, <https://www.climatecentral.org/climate-matters/urban-heat-islands-2023>

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Climate resilience involves repairing, maintaining, and innovating physical infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, transportation, and buildings. It also involves expanding technical capacity within the local agencies with regards to risk mitigation, emergency management, and socioeconomic vulnerabilities in the face of observed and projected climate change impacts. Climate resilience efforts also include raising awareness through educational programs and campaigns. This cannot be tackled without explicit line items in the City's budget dedicated towards climate resilience programs.

Especially in the current context of federal rollbacks on climate regulation and funding, local leadership and funding on climate resilience cannot be lost or minimized. The time to prepare for climate change has been ongoing and the City has yet to take the critical steps necessary to reflect this priority across all agencies and through its budgeting processes.

Moreover, without investment, the financial costs of climate impacts will be a burden to the City and to all New Yorkers. **Studies estimate that the costs of climate change across New York will rise to \$10 billion annually by 2050.⁴ And yet, the costs of inaction are far greater. Studies estimate that the cost of inaction in the state will be \$55 billion in the next decade for coastal storms and flood-event-related damages.⁵**

The Rise to Resilience Coalition recommends the following five priorities for climate resilience and adaptation in the FY27 budget:

- 1) **Allocate DEP's budget for the Bureau of Coastal Resilience in FY27 to \$10 million, of which \$5 million would support 45 new staff positions and \$5 million would go toward developing a compound flood model and other long-term planning efforts.** The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is responsible for upgrading critical drinking and stormwater infrastructure, as well as coastal resiliency infrastructure across New York City. We applaud the formation of a new Bureau of Coastal Resilience within DEP, as part of commitments made in the latest PlaNYC. The Rise to Resilience Coalition also encourages the Council to introduce legislation to codify this office into permanent existence, and to lead the governance of coastal resilience for the City. Given the large portfolio of this office, we are calling for the City to fund the office with adequate permanent staff.
- 2) **Allocate long-term funding for the City's current portfolio of climate resilience, such as the Cloudburst Management and Bluebelt program, and expand funding**

⁴ Rebuild by Design. *Resilient Infrastructure for New York State*. <https://rebuildbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/1329.pdf>

⁵ Rebuild by Design. *Atlas of Disaster: New York*. <https://rebuildbydesign.org/atlas-of-disaster-new-york-state/>

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for new projects such as Resilient Acquisitions. For instance, we applaud the 2023 expansion of the Cloudburst Program, investing \$390 million at four new sites. Future expansion of the program should not exclude at-risk communities with high water tables, as projects around the city, such as the Arverne East project in Rockaway, have proven green infrastructure to be effective in reducing the impact of intense rainfall despite the high-water table. Additionally, we recommend expansion of the Bluebelt program, like the new projects at Kissena Park and Prospect Park. The Coalition strongly supports NYC DEP's Bluebelt Program, which preserves natural drainage corridors including streams, ponds, and wetlands, and enhances them to perform their functions of conveying, storing, and filtering runoff precipitation or stormwater. The program has been implemented successfully on Staten Island, and we encourage the city to invest in the program so more neighborhoods can benefit. Regarding the Resilient Acquisitions program, the City should leverage the \$250 million investment from the New York State Environmental Bond Act, and identify other sources of funding, to support the implementation of a voluntary buyout program, as well as all its education, mental health and counseling services, and financial assistance components. As one of the many solutions we need in the face of the climate crisis, the Rise to Resilience Coalition strongly supports voluntary buyouts. We appreciated that the City committed to launching a voluntary buyout program in the latest PlaNYC and has established the Resilient Acquisitions program. However, these types of programs can only be successful with large, committed, and dedicated long-term funding. We encourage the city to identify other sources of funding to establish a permanent, voluntary buyout program.

- 3) **Reject the water rental payment in the FY27 budget.** A major concern in the FY27 budget is related to the water rental payment charge. The water rental payment is a regressive tax that originated at a time when there was substantial debt related to the water and sewage systems. The debt has since been rectified, making this payment outdated and unnecessary. Additionally, the rental payment takes funds generated by water ratepayers and transfers them to the City's general fund. These funds are critical for supporting investments in water infrastructure. Forcing a payment upon the NYC Water Board further strains DEP's budget and handcuffs the City's ability to respond to climate change. A more equitable route would be to restructure water utility rates to consider the contribution to stormwater runoff. Currently, water rates do not capture the permeability or impermeability of surfaces. By separately and fairly categorizing stormwater runoff, the City will benefit from designated revenues for stormwater management, as well as the creation of an incentive program(s) for green infrastructure and other strategies that reduce flooding events. In fact, the New York City Independent Budget Office released a research report on November 2023, which

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estimated that the City could receive revenue ranging from \$266 million to \$892 million per year from a similar structure as other major U.S. cities like Seattle, Baltimore, and Philadelphia.⁶

- 4) **Fully fund the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice (MOCEJ) to complete the planning and engagement required to fulfill Local Law 122 and 149, and develop a Five Borough Adaptation Plan.** There is an urgent need for comprehensive, long-term planning for climate resilience in New York City, which will dictate how funding can and should be spent. The Rise to Resilience Coalition partners led the advocacy around Local Law 122, which established a Five Borough Climate Adaptation Plan to be led by the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice (MOCEJ). This plan should include recommendations for resilience and adaptation measures to protect residents, property, and infrastructure throughout the city. It would identify areas that are highly vulnerable to climate hazards to help determine where resiliency and adaptation measures should first be implemented. Now, after the recent passage of Local Law 149, this adaptation plan will be completed as part of the City's longer term sustainability plan, PlaNYC. The Coalition strongly urges MOCEJ to develop and publish a long-term climate adaptation plan.

- 5) **We encourage the City Council to allocate \$1.2 million for cooling center funding in the Mayor's proposed budget for Local Law 128 of 2025, which codifies the city's Cooling Center program for heat emergencies.** As climate change progresses, the city is experiencing more frequent, intense, and prolonged heat waves. These extreme heat events can lead to severe health issues, including dehydration, heat exhaustion and stroke, and even death. Vulnerable populations, such as the elderly, individuals with pre-existing health conditions, and those living in poorly ventilated housing, are particularly at risk. In fact, extreme heat is the leading cause of weather-related fatalities in the United States, and New York City sees an average of 520 heat-related deaths annually⁷. Addressing this issue is critical to reducing health risks and improving the well-being of all New Yorkers. Cooling Centers are a critical emergency resource. As such, the program should be protected from cuts and provided with additional funding to expand operating hours beyond regular schedules on activation days. Analysis by the Independent Budget Office shows Cooling Center hours drop off

⁶ New York City Independent Budget Office (November 2023). *Raindrops Keep Falling On New York: Potential Implications Of a Stormwater Fee In New York City*. <https://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/raindrops-keep-falling-on-new-york-potential-implications-of-a-stormwater-fee-in-new-york-city-november-2023.pdf>

⁷ Mayor's Office of Climate & Environmental Justice - Extreme Heat Adaptation, [Extreme Heat - NYC Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice](#)

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significantly on weekday evenings and weekends, leaving heat vulnerable communities with no lifeline.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and for your work to ensure New Yorkers are protected from the impacts of the climate crisis. The Rise to Resilience Coalition is willing and looking forward to partnering with the City Council to advance any and all of these recommendations and initiatives. I am happy to discuss these items in more detail with you at any point. Please don't hesitate to reach out at policyfellow@waterfrontalliance.org.



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March 19, 2026

**Testimony of WE ACT for Environmental Justice
to the New York City Council Committee on Environmental Protection
on March 19, 2026 regarding Fiscal Year '27 Preliminary Budget**

Dear Committee Chair Gennaro, and Committee on Environmental Protection and Waterfronts:

WE ACT for Environmental Justice is a community-based organization that has been building healthy communities by ensuring that people of color and/or low-income residents participate meaningfully in the creation of sound and fair environmental health policies and practices for over 35 years.

I am testifying today in support of the [Rise to Resilience \(R2R\) Coalition](#) and their budget priorities for climate resilience solutions for New York City. R2R is a campaign and coalition, comprised of more than 100 organizations representing residents; leaders in business, labor and justice; volunteers; scientists; environmental advocates; and design professionals collectively calling on our federal, state, and local governments to make climate resilience an urgent priority.

It is with this mission in mind that we urge this Council to prioritize the following fiscal actions:

- 1) **Allocate DEP's budget for the Bureau of Coastal Resilience in FY27 to \$10 million, of which \$5 million would support 45 new staff positions and \$5 million would go toward developing a compound flood model and other long-term planning efforts.** The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is responsible for upgrading critical drinking and stormwater infrastructure, as well as coastal resiliency infrastructure across New York City. We applaud the formation of a new Bureau of Coastal Resilience within DEP, as part of commitments made in the latest PlaNYC. The Rise to Resilience Coalition also encourages the Council to introduce legislation to codify this office into permanent existence, and to lead the governance of coastal resilience for the City. Given the large portfolio of this office, we are calling for the City to fund the office with adequate permanent staff.
- 2) **Allocate long-term funding for the City's current portfolio of climate resilience, such as the Cloudburst Management and Bluelb program,**



and expand funding for new projects such as Resilient Acquisitions.

For instance, we applaud the 2023 expansion of the Cloudburst Program, investing \$390 million at four new sites. Future expansion of the program should not exclude at-risk communities with high water tables, as projects around the city, such as the Arverne East project in Rockaway, have proven green infrastructure to be effective in reducing the impact of intense rainfall despite the high water table. Additionally, we recommend expansion of the Bluebelt program, like the new projects at Kissena Park and Prospect Park. The Coalition strongly supports NYC DEP's Bluebelt Program, which preserves natural drainage corridors including streams, ponds, and wetlands, and enhances them to perform their functions of conveying, storing, and filtering runoff precipitation or stormwater. The program has been implemented successfully on Staten Island and we encourage the city to invest in the program so more neighborhoods can benefit. Regarding the Resilient Acquisitions program, the City should leverage the \$250 million investment from the New York State Environmental Bond Act, and identify other sources of funding, to support the implementation of a voluntary buyout program, as well as all its education, mental health and counseling services, and financial assistance components. As one of the many solutions we need in the face of the climate crisis, the Rise to Resilience Coalition strongly supports voluntary buyouts. We appreciated that the City committed to launching a voluntary buyout program in the latest PlaNYC and has established the Resilient Acquisitions program. However, these types of programs can only be successful with large, committed, and dedicated long-term funding. We encourage the city to identify other sources of funding to establish a permanent, voluntary buyout program.

- 3) **Reject the water rental payment in the FY27 budget.** A major concern in the FY27 budget is related to the water rental payment charge. The water rental payment is a regressive tax that originated at a time when there was substantial debt related to the water and sewage systems. The debt has since been rectified, making this payment outdated and unnecessary. Additionally, the rental payment takes funds generated by water ratepayers and transfers them to the City's general fund. These funds are critical for supporting investments in water infrastructure. Forcing a payment upon the NYC Water Board further strains DEP's budget and handcuffs the City's ability to respond to climate change. A more equitable route would be to restructure water utility rates to consider the contribution to stormwater runoff. Currently, water rates do not capture the permeability or impermeability of surfaces. By separately and fairly categorizing stormwater runoff, the City will benefit from



designated revenues for stormwater management, as well as the creation of an incentive program(s) for green infrastructure and other strategies that reduce flooding events. In fact, the New York City Independent Budget Office released a research report on November 2023, which estimated that the City could receive revenue ranging from \$266 million to \$892 million per year from a similar structure as other major U.S. cities like Seattle, Baltimore, and Philadelphia.¹

- 4) **Fully fund the Mayor’s Office of Climate and Environmental Justice (MOCEJ) to complete the planning and engagement required to fulfill Local Law 122 and 149, and develop a Five Borough Adaptation Plan.** There is an urgent need for comprehensive, long-term planning for climate resilience in New York City, which will dictate how funding can and should be spent. The Rise to Resilience Coalition partners led the advocacy around Local Law 122, which established a Five Borough Climate Adaptation Plan to be led by the Mayor’s Office of Climate and Environmental Justice (MOCEJ). This plan should include recommendations for resilience and adaptation measures to protect residents, property, and infrastructure throughout the city. It would identify areas that are highly vulnerable to climate hazards to help determine where resiliency and adaptation measures should first be implemented. Now, after the recent passage of Local Law 149, this adaptation plan will be completed as part of the City’s longer term sustainability plan, PlaNYC. The Coalition strongly urges MOCEJ to develop and publish a long-term climate adaptation plan.

- 5) **We encourage the City Council to allocate \$1.2 million for cooling center funding in the Mayor’s proposed budget for Local Law 128 of 2025, which codifies the city’s Cooling Center program for heat emergencies.** As climate change progresses, the city is experiencing more frequent, intense, and prolonged heat waves. These extreme heat events can lead to severe health issues, including dehydration, heat exhaustion and stroke, and even death. Vulnerable populations, such as the elderly, individuals with pre-existing health conditions, and those living in poorly ventilated housing, are particularly at risk. In fact, extreme heat is the leading cause of weather-related fatalities in the United States, and New

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<https://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/raindrops-keep-falling-on-new-york-potential-implications-of-a-stormwater-fee-in-new-york-city-november-2023.pdf>



York City sees an average of 520 heat-related deaths annually². Addressing this issue is critical to reducing health risks and improving the well-being of all New Yorkers. Cooling Centers are a critical emergency resource. As such, the program should be protected from cuts and provided with additional funding to expand operating hours beyond regular schedules on activation days. Analysis by the Independent Budget Office shows Cooling Center hours drop off significantly on weekday evenings and weekends, leaving heat vulnerable communities with no lifeline.

Taken together, these investments represent a coherent and urgently needed strategy to protect New Yorkers most vulnerable to climate change while advancing the City’s commitments to environmental justice, resilience, health equity, and affordability. By prioritizing these recommendations in the FY 2026–27 budget, the City Council can move beyond piecemeal responses and deliver durable, equitable solutions that safeguard frontline communities today while building a more resilient New York City for the future.

Caleb Smith

Resiliency Coordinator
caleb.smith@weact.org



² Mayor’s Office of Climate & Environmental Justice – Extreme Heat Adaptation, [Extreme Heat - NYC Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice](#)



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**Testimony for Committee on Environmental Protection and Waterfront
Budget and Oversight Hearings on The Preliminary Budget for Fiscal
Year 2027**

March 22, 2026

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Elizabeth Jordan
*Co-Legal Director, Make
the Road NY*

Thank you to the Environmental Protection, Resiliency and Waterfronts Committee chair Council Member Gennaro for the opportunity to submit written testimony today.

My name is Faiza Azam and I am the Climate and Labor Organizer for ALIGN: The Alliance for a Greater New York. We bring together labor, climate, and community for a more just and sustainable New York. We co-coordinate the Climate Works for All Coalition—a group of labor, community, student, parent, faith, and environmental justice organizations fighting climate change and inequality in New York City. Our campaigns move us towards an equitable economy, a resilient, livable and healthy climate, and prioritize justice for low income Black and Brown communities across New York City.

[Over a quarter](#) of New York City's public school buildings are at risk of extreme flooding and of these buildings about 9.5 percent are located in a 100-year floodplain. However, evidence has shown that as climate change worsens 100 year storms will occur more frequently with [one study](#) suggesting these storms could happen every one to thirty years. From devastating flooding to extremely poor air quality caused by greenhouse gases, students, teachers, and faculty are often among those first impacted when climate disaster strikes. Our school buildings have been underinvested in for years and lack the proper infrastructure to be resilient in our worsening climate crisis. This lack of investment puts our students and workers at constant risk.

Central to ALIGN's work is our Green, Healthy Schools campaign which primarily focuses on decarbonizing public school buildings because we believe that NYC 3K-12 students, teachers, parents, and school staff deserve safe and healthy workplaces to work, learn and play regardless of their zipcode. Buildings are the leading source of greenhouse gas emissions in New York City so if there is any hope of reaching our ambitious climate goals, we must prioritize building decarbonization.

Moreover, this will save the City millions in climate disaster repairs by being proactive in investments and it will make New York a national leader in the transition to a clean energy economy. Investments in decarbonizing public

schools will lower energy costs and provide savings for the city which can be reinvested in schools, create thousands of green, union family sustaining jobs and reduce air pollution which can improve the overall health of students, teachers and faculty.

We strongly urge the City to invest \$2.2B this budget session to support clean energy upgrades beginning with the upgrading and electrifying schools with the schools most in need and centering those in environmental justice communities. This investment will increase the number of schools currently scheduled to be electrified and upgraded in the coming year and simultaneously create thousands of jobs in the process. Additionally, increasing the funds for this fiscal year and annually for the next 4 years will put New York City on a path to electrify and upgrade all 1200 school buildings by 2030, [creating over 320,000 clean energy jobs](#) and a net zero emissions school district by 2040. This is our coalition's long term vision for Green, Healthy Schools.

We are proud to stand with labor on this issue and engage union membership in this plan. We see workers from teachers to nurses to janitors mobilizing for Green, Healthy Schools and the need for more investments because they work in these conditions everyday and deserve to make a living without putting their health at risk. This is an investment in the New York City workforce, New York City students, and New York City families

With more than 1000 buildings in the school district, the City must be proactive and invest in schools to improve infrastructure and create a healthier and more resilient city for the long term. We look forward to working more with the Council to ensure our public school buildings receive the investment and care they deserve.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Faiza Azam



March 19, 2026

Peter Malinowski
Billion Oyster Project
10 South St. New York, NY 10004

Re: New York City Council Committee on Environmental Protection and Waterfronts Preliminary Budgetary Hearing

Dear Chairperson Gennaro and Members of the Committee,

My name is Pete Malinowski, and I am the President and Chief Executive Officer at Billion Oyster Project. On behalf of the Billion Oyster Project, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am testifying today in support of the Rise to Resilience (R2R) Coalition and SWIM Coalition and their budget priorities for climate resilience and clean water solutions for New York City.

Billion Oyster Project is a nonprofit organization dedicated to restoring oyster reefs to New York Harbor through hands-on educational programming and large-scale reef restoration efforts. Since our founding, we have restored over 183 million oysters while engaging over 154,000 New Yorkers in building a healthier, more resilient harbor. Our work intersects with numerous waterfront and water quality initiatives, and we strongly support policies that promote clean water and equitable access to the waterfront.

Billion Oyster Project strongly urges the City's budget to reflect a commitment to make real progress towards an end to Combined Sewer Overflows. As New Yorkers we continue to be denied access to our largest public space, New York Harbor, every time it rains. Climate change is already here, critical investments in CSOs and water quality infrastructure are needed to ensure the safety of New Yorkers and our Harbor. Untreated wastewater and sewage find their way into our waterways during rainfall and extreme weather events, which are becoming more frequent due to climate change. This negatively impacts the underwater ecosystems that we are actively working to repair and restore.

New York City has witnessed, firsthand, the risks and impacts that climate change poses to our residents, infrastructure, and natural resources. Flooding events are the most common climate-related hazard across the city and nearly 14 percent of New Yorkers (about 1.3 million people) live within or adjacent to the 100-year floodplain. Moreover, nearly 78 percent (about 7.2 million New Yorkers) have an urban heat index (UHI) of 8°F or higher, meaning that people in those census tracts feel at least 8°F more heat because of the local built environment.

Climate risks and impacts are no longer abstract or projections of the future. They are tangible, measurable, and while not avoidable anymore, we know there are critical policies, plans, and funds that can reduce the burden of impact on New Yorkers. In

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billionoysterproject.org
newyorkharborschool.org



order to reduce the city's vulnerability to climate change, direct and bold action must be taken immediately. That starts with making critical investments in the City Budget toward a more resilient, equitable and healthy future.

To address these challenges, we call for Council support for 7 critical priorities in this year's budget:

1. Provide \$10 Million for DEP to complete a comprehensive Stormwater Master Plan
 - a. Combined sewage overflow is a big issue that directly affects both our communities and water quality. We ask for this to be addressed by funding a future in which we achieve zero CSO's by 2050.
2. Fully fund the Department of Environmental Protection at \$2 Billion
3. Reject the \$313 Million Rental Payment from the NYC Water Board
4. Provide \$4 Million to fully fund implementation of the Unified Stormwater Rule
5. Provide \$10 Million to fully staff the Bureau of Coastal Resiliency of which \$5 million would support 45 new staff positions and \$5 million would go toward developing a compound flood model and other long-term planning efforts.
6. Allocate long-term funding for the City's current portfolio of climate resilience, such as the Cloudburst Management and Blubelt program, and expand funding for new projects such as Resilient Acquisitions
7. Fully fund the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice (MOCEJ) to complete the planning and engagement required to fulfill Local Law 122 and 149, and develop a Five Borough Adaptation Plan

Today we are faced with unprecedented attacks on climate mitigation and resiliency work, on clean air, clean water, and environmental justice, from the federal government. Now more than ever, we need bold leadership from the New York City Council and this Administration to ensure that adequate funding and resources are provided to critical agencies to protect existing ecosystems and to prepare our city for this climate reality.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully,

Billion Oyster Project

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Pete Malinowski".

Pete Malinowski
Executive Director



BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD 8

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Hudson River Greenway

Bob Bender

Special Committee on

Racial Equity

Margaret Della

Special Committee on

Veterans' Services

Sergio Villaverde

February 12, 2026

Lisa F. Garcia

Commissioner

New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

59-17 Junction Boulevard

Flushing, NY 11373

Re: New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Unified Storm Water Rule

Dear Commissioner Garcia:

On behalf of the Environment & Sanitation Committee of Bronx Community Board 8, we are writing to support strengthening New York City's (NYC) Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Unified Storm Water Rule (USWR).

In September 2020, the New York City Council passed LL 91, enabling DEP to move forward with amendments necessary to expedite USWR. It enhanced existing storm water regulations, while integrating and combining a myriad of administration procedures to give clarity to developers. After dozens of public hearings, the rule became effective on February 15, 2022.¹

Clearly, climate change is causing more powerful storms and extreme weather events that deleteriously impact NYC's growth. The USWR was promulgated to build resiliency and sustainability into our urban planning. **Its purpose is to mitigate storm water runoff's devastating impacts: street, coastal, and groundwater flooding, sewer backups, erosion, and combined sewer overflow that pollute our water bodies in violation of the Clean Water Act of 1972.**

Today, NYC is experiencing new and re-development projects at breakneck speed. Historically, developers have always been responsible for containment of storm water runoff on site. However, USWR provides developers with guidance and metrics that must be met using bio-retention methods such as green roofs, rain gardens, and permeable pavements. No one is asking them to build sewers. Despite intense development pressures from the real estate industry, the DEP, as stewards of our environment, must continue to protect New Yorkers' public safety by vigorously **enforcing** the Unified Storm Water Rule.

¹ <https://www.nyc.gov/site/dep/water/unified-stormwater-rule.page>

Additionally, to mitigate the serious damage caused by climate change and unmanaged storm water runoff, we believe USWR must be expanded. Currently, USWR only applies to public or private development projects that disturbs the soil of approximately .46 acres or more or creates 5,000 feet or more of new impervious surfaces (approximately, .11 acres). We believe more properties need to fall under USWR's umbrella in order to meet the serious environmental challenges facing New York City.

During this budget season, it is essential that funding for the DEP's USWR staffing and Other Than Personal Services be increased to enable them to work with developers efficiently and process the growing expansion of applications quickly. We hope that your advocacy will support USWR's environmental mission and allow our city to build and expand sustainably.

Please let us know if you have any questions. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

J. Reyes

Julie Reyes
Chairperson
Bronx Community Board 8



Daniel Rowen
Chair, Environment & Sanitation Committee
Bronx Community Board 8

cc: Vanessa L. Gibson, Bronx Borough President
Ciara Gannon, Director of Community Boards, Bronx BP
Alina Dowe, Bronx Borough Director, NYC Mayor's Office of Mass Engagement (OME)
Angela Licata, Deputy Commissioner of Sustainability, NYC DEP
Melissa Enoch, Assistant Commissioner, Bureau of Environmental Planning & Analysis, NYC DEP
Eleftheria Ardizzone, Bronx Borough Commissioner, NYC DEP
Julie Menin, NYC Council Speaker
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Eric Dinowitz, New York City Council Member (CD 11)
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Sebastian Chittilappilly, Chair, Budget Committee, Bronx CB8



Bronx Council for Environmental Quality

Testimony before the NYC Council Committee on Environment and Waterfronts

March 19, 2026

My name is Karen Argenti, and I am speaking on behalf of the Bronx Council for Environmental Quality to request you provide extra (other than CSO required) funding to provide Nature Based Solutions, such as Green Infrastructure, Living Shorelines, Green Roofs and its maintenance.

NBS, GI, and GI workforce to lower the overall temperature during the summertime in NYC. If you capture more carbon -- which happens by promoting natural systems, it works faster than the efficient electricity methods and other adaptations. Oh, and if you just increase maintenance (which never has enough funding statewide), you get a very quick doubling effect.

Lowering the Temperature with Nature to mitigate Extreme weather events, including coastal and inland flooding is the quickest way to capture carbon, cut down on CO², and stop the heat waves of the future forecasted to be at 100-degrees.

Whatever funding that is being used to make electricity more efficient to manage resiliency is not working. Part of that funding should be used to begin a city-wide greening which should include workforce development to maintain these structures.

In addition, the DEP should be able to also help other agencies with training and education of how to do manage their own city property.

Finally, we need increased funding of the Unified Storm Water Rule expense budget so they can keep up with all the new housing construction planned in our city.

Please provide extra funding for these Nature Based Solutions, such as Green Infrastructure, Living Shorelines, Green Roofs, and its maintenance.

Thank you.



PUBLIC TESTIMONY OF CHRISTIAN MURPHY / BRONX RIVER ALLIANCE

March 20, 2026

New York City Council Committee on Environmental Protection and Waterfronts Preliminary Budgetary Hearing

Submitted by Christian Murphy, Ecology and Education Manager, Bronx River Alliance

Thank you, Chair Gennaro, and members of the Environmental Protection and Waterfront Committee, for the opportunity to submit testimony. I am testifying today in support of the [Rise to Resilience \(R2R\) Coalition](#) and their budget priorities for climate resilience solutions for New York City. R2R is a campaign and coalition, comprised of more than 100 organizations representing residents; leaders in business, labor and justice; volunteers; scientists; environmental advocates; and design professionals collectively calling on our federal, state, and local governments to make climate resilience an urgent priority.

The Bronx River Alliance strongly urges the City's budget to reflect the reality that climate change is already here, affecting millions of residents today.

New York City has witnessed, firsthand, the risks and impacts that climate change poses to our residents, infrastructure, and natural resources. Flooding events are the most common climate-related hazard across the city¹ and nearly 14 percent of New Yorkers (about 1.3 million people) live within or adjacent to the 100-year floodplain.² Moreover, nearly 78 percent (about 7.2 million New Yorkers) have an urban heat index (UHI) of 8°F or higher, meaning that people in those census tracts feel at least 8°F more heat because of the local built environment.³ These impacts hit harder in vulnerable Environmental Justice communities, where compounding socioeconomic factors hinder and complicate the ability to react to and prepare for climate emergencies. In the Bronx, 24.4% of residents live below the poverty line⁴, and New York's 15th congressional district which covers the South Bronx has been identified as the poorest in the nation⁵.

¹ Rebuild by Design. *Atlas of Disaster: New York*.

<https://rebuildbydesign.org/atlas-of-disaster-new-york-state/>

² Rebuild by Design. *Who Lives in the NYC Floodplain*.

<https://rebuildbydesign.org/reports/who-lives-in-the-nyc-floodplain-2/>

³ Climate Central (July 2023) *Urban Heat Spots*,

<https://www.climatecentral.org/climate-matters/urban-heat-islands-2023>

⁴ United States Census Bureau. *2021 Census Releases*.

<https://www.census.gov/data/what-is-data-census-gov/latest-releases/2021.html>

⁵ Politico. Ritchie Torres represents America's poorest congressional district. He's on a mission to save public housing.

<https://www.politico.com/news/2021/04/26/ritchie-torres-new-117th-congress-freshman-members-diversity-2021-484443>

The Bronx's Environmental Justice communities know firsthand that climate change is real and it is here. We know there are critical policies, plans, and funds that can reduce the burden of impact on New Yorkers. In order to reduce the city's vulnerability to climate change, direct and bold action must be taken immediately. That starts with making critical investments in the City Budget toward a more resilient, equitable future.

Climate resilience involves repairing, maintaining, and innovating physical infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, transportation, and buildings. It also involves expanding technical capacity within the local agencies with regards to risk mitigation, emergency management, and socioeconomic vulnerabilities in the face of observed and projected climate change impacts. Climate resilience efforts also include raising awareness through educational programs and campaigns. This cannot be tackled without explicit line items in the City's budget dedicated towards climate resilience programs.

Especially in the current context of federal rollbacks on climate regulation and funding, local leadership and funding on climate resilience cannot be lost or minimized. The time to prepare for climate change has been ongoing and the City has yet to take the critical steps necessary to reflect this priority across all agencies and through its budgeting processes.

Moreover, without investment, the financial costs of climate impacts will be a burden to the City and to all New Yorkers. **Studies estimate that the costs of climate change across New York will rise to \$10 billion annually by 2050.⁴ And yet, the costs of inaction are far greater. Studies estimate that the cost of inaction in the state will be \$55 billion in the next decade for coastal storms and flood-event-related damages.⁵**

The Bronx River Alliance supports the Rise to Resilience Coalition's recommendations for the following five priorities for climate resilience and adaptation in the FY27 budget:

- 1) **Allocate DEP's budget for the Bureau of Coastal Resilience in FY27 to \$10 million, of which \$5 million would support 45 new staff positions and \$5 million would go toward developing a compound flood model and other long-term planning efforts.** The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is responsible for upgrading critical drinking and stormwater infrastructure, as well as coastal resiliency infrastructure across New York City. We applaud the formation of a new Bureau of Coastal Resilience within DEP, as part of commitments made in the latest PlaNYC. The Rise to Resilience Coalition also encourages the Council to introduce legislation to codify this office into permanent existence, and to lead the governance of coastal resilience for

⁴ Rebuild by Design. *Resilient Infrastructure for New York State*.
<https://rebuildbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/1329.pdf>

⁵ Rebuild by Design. *Atlas of Disaster: New York*.
<https://rebuildbydesign.org/atlas-of-disaster-new-york-state/>

the City. Given the large portfolio of this office, we are calling for the City to fund the office with adequate permanent staff.

- 2) **Allocate long-term funding for the City's current portfolio of climate resilience, such as the Cloudburst Management and Blubelt program, and expand funding for new projects such as Resilient Acquisitions.** For instance, we applaud the 2023 expansion of the Cloudburst Program, investing \$390 million at four new sites. Future expansion of the program should not exclude at-risk communities with high water tables, as projects around the city, such as the Arverne East project in Rockaway, have proven green infrastructure to be effective in reducing the impact of intense rainfall despite the high water table. Additionally, we recommend expansion of the Bluebelt program, like the new projects at Kissena Park and Prospect Park. The Coalition strongly supports NYC DEP's Bluebelt Program, which preserves natural drainage corridors including streams, ponds, and wetlands, and enhances them to perform their functions of conveying, storing, and filtering runoff precipitation or stormwater. The program has been implemented successfully on Staten Island and we encourage the city to invest in the program so more neighborhoods can benefit. Regarding the Resilient Acquisitions program, the City should leverage the \$250 million investment from the New York State Environmental Bond Act, and identify other sources of funding, to support the implementation of a voluntary buyout program, as well as all its education, mental health and counseling services, and financial assistance components. As one of the many solutions we need in the face of the climate crisis, the Rise to Resilience Coalition strongly supports voluntary buyouts. We appreciated that the City committed to launching a voluntary buyout program in the latest PlaNYC and has established the Resilient Acquisitions program. However, these types of programs can only be successful with large, committed, and dedicated long-term funding. We encourage the city to identify other sources of funding to establish a permanent, voluntary buyout program.
- 3) **Reject the water rental payment in the FY27 budget.** A major concern in the FY27 budget is related to the water rental payment charge. The water rental payment is a regressive tax that originated at a time when there was substantial debt related to the water and sewage systems. The debt has since been rectified, making this payment outdated and unnecessary. Additionally, the rental payment takes funds generated by water ratepayers and transfers them to the City's general fund. These funds are critical for supporting investments in water infrastructure. Forcing a payment upon the NYC Water Board further strains DEP's budget and handcuffs the City's ability to respond to climate change. A more equitable route would be to restructure water utility rates to consider the contribution to stormwater runoff. Currently, water rates do not capture the permeability or impermeability of surfaces. By separately and fairly categorizing stormwater runoff, the City will benefit from designated revenues for stormwater management, as well as the creation of an incentive program(s) for green infrastructure and other strategies that reduce flooding events. In fact, the New York City Independent Budget Office released a research report in November 2023, which estimated that the

City could receive revenue ranging from \$266 million to \$892 million per year from a similar structure as other major U.S. cities like Seattle, Baltimore, and Philadelphia.⁶

- 4) **Fully fund the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice (MOCEJ) to complete the planning and engagement required to fulfill Local Law 122 and 149, and develop a Five Borough Adaptation Plan.** There is an urgent need for comprehensive, long-term planning for climate resilience in New York City, which will dictate how funding can and should be spent. The Rise to Resilience Coalition partners led the advocacy around Local Law 122, which established a Five Borough Climate Adaptation Plan to be led by the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice (MOCEJ). This plan should include recommendations for resilience and adaptation measures to protect residents, property, and infrastructure throughout the city. It would identify areas that are highly vulnerable to climate hazards to help determine where resiliency and adaptation measures should first be implemented. Now, after the recent passage of Local Law 149, this adaptation plan will be completed as part of the City's longer term sustainability plan, PlaNYC. The Coalition strongly urges MOCEJ to develop and publish a long-term climate adaptation plan.

- 5) **We encourage the City Council to allocate \$1.2 million for cooling center funding in the Mayor's proposed budget for Local Law 128 of 2025, which codifies the city's Cooling Center program for heat emergencies.** As climate change progresses, the city is experiencing more frequent, intense, and prolonged heat waves. These extreme heat events can lead to severe health issues, including dehydration, heat exhaustion and stroke, and even death. Vulnerable populations, such as the elderly, individuals with pre-existing health conditions, and those living in poorly ventilated housing, are particularly at risk. In fact, extreme heat is the leading cause of weather-related fatalities in the United States, and New York City sees an average of 520 heat-related deaths annually⁷. Addressing this issue is critical to reducing health risks and improving the well-being of all New Yorkers. Cooling Centers are a critical emergency resource. As such, the program should be protected from cuts and provided with additional funding to expand operating hours beyond regular schedules on activation days. Analysis by the Independent Budget Office shows Cooling Center hours drop off significantly on weekday evenings and weekends, leaving heat vulnerable communities with no lifeline.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for your work to ensure New Yorkers are protected from the impacts of the climate crisis. The Bronx River Alliance is willing and looking forward to supporting the City Council to advance any and all of these recommendations and initiatives.

⁶ New York City Independent Budget Office (November 2023). *Raindrops Keep Falling On New York: Potential Implications Of a Stormwater Fee In New York City*. <https://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/raindrops-keep-falling-on-new-york-potential-implications-of-a-storm-water-fee-in-new-york-city-november-2023.pdf>

⁷ Mayor's Office of Climate & Environmental Justice – Extreme Heat Adaptation, [Extreme Heat - NYC Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice](#)

Sincerely,
Christian Murphy
Bronx River Alliance

HEAT PUMPS FOR ALL

Expanded Testimony Submitted by Richard Leigh, PhD, PE, LEED AP

On behalf of Food and Water Watch to the

New York City Council Committee on Environment Protection and Waterfronts

On 19 March 2026

OUR PROPOSAL: That New York City provide \$10,000 incentives to 1000 selected 1-2 family homeowners for acquisition of a whole-building heat pump system when their existing oil or gas-fired boiler or furnace fails or is failing. As presented, the total budget would be \$10 million plus administrative costs.

WHY THIS COMMITTEE? Our proposal involves a requisition for money, and if implemented, will accelerate improvements in air quality while aiding the city in meeting its greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction goals.

PROGRAM JUSTIFICATION AND CONCERNS:

- * [Climate change is real](#) and a viable human future will require a 100% reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050. (Links such as the preceding provide technical backup material.)
- * Alternative solutions such as [geoengineering](#) can provide only marginal reductions in risk, with troublesome environmental impacts and legal ambiguities.
- * **Elimination of GHG emissions is the only viable way to a livable future** ([IPCC, p. 28](#)).
- * For New York City, this requires the replacement of all fuel-based systems with electric devices. (GHGs associated with electricity generation will decrease toward zero as New York State fulfills its [obligations](#).)
- * NYC now requires large buildings to reduce emissions to near zero by 2050 ([Local Law 97](#)) and new construction to be all-electric ([Local Law 154](#)). This policy is consistent with science, will be challenged by real estate interests, and must be maintained.
- * The emission reductions associated with electrification must be extended to the nearly one million smaller buildings spread across the five boroughs, especially one and two-family dwellings whose owners are financially challenged. This proposal will demonstrate the technical practicality of efficient electric heating.
- * For space heating, the clear choice is heat pumps, which, powered by electricity, suck heat from outdoor air (even in winter) and deliver it to the interior space. They provide three to four times as much heat per unit of electric energy than does old fashioned resistance heating. They also provide efficient electric cooling in the summer.
- * A viable solution to this challenge is a New York City “Heat Pumps for All” program, providing a \$10,000 incentive to 1000 homeowners, at a cost of \$10 million.

- * For several reasons, New York City must establish this program as rapidly as possible:
 - * Thousands of smaller buildings in NYC have heating boilers or furnaces that are at or near the end of useful life. If they are replaced by similar, new fuel-fired appliances, the less expensive alternative, they will continue to pollute, and will become worthless stranded assets over the next ten to twenty years as gas becomes increasingly expensive and unavailable.
 - * The city must make replacement of these systems by heat pumps practical for cash-strapped homeowners who are already financially burdened. \$10,000 will not pay for a complete heat pump system, but will make one affordable for many homeowners.
 - * To ensure leak-free and reliable systems, Heat pumps require a well-trained, unionized work force. Heat Pumps for All must incorporate training and recruitment components and links to energy efficiency loans.
 - * [Available research](#) has shown that in many areas the New York City electric distribution system is currently adequate for heat pump installations in 30% of buildings, and that winter peak demand can be held down by straightforward energy efficiency improvements. As long as reasonable criteria for building characteristics are developed and followed, demand for this program will greatly exceed supply.

We urge the Mayor and Council to set up a \$10 million initial allocation in the upcoming city budget to begin such a program and upgrade about 1,000 homes in 2027.

Heat Pumps for All is a project of #GasFreeNYC, a coalition of organizations including Food & WaterWatch, AIA-NY, New York Communities for Change (NYCC), New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG), MCA New York, WE ACT for Environmental Justice, and other local environmental organizations.

Richard Leigh is a consulting physicist and engineer. Active in the field of energy efficient engineering and systems studies for over thirty years, he holds a PhD in Physics and is a Professional Engineer and a LEED AP. Formerly he was a Visiting Professor of Physics at Pratt Institute, teaching courses in climate change science and mitigation. He also served for eight years as Director of Research at Urban Green Council, where his work included building energy use data, low emission futures, building code development, and worker education. He can be reached at rwleigh@earthlink.net.



New York City Council
250 Broadway
New York, NY 10007

Re: Written Comments for New York City Council Committee on Environmental Protection and Waterfronts Preliminary Budgetary Hearing

March 19, 2026

To the New York City Council Committee on Environmental Protection and Waterfronts:

My name is Rebecca Pryor, and I am the Executive Director at the Guardians of Flushing Bay. Thank you, Chair Gennaro, and members of the Environmental Protection and Waterfront Committee, for the opportunity to submit public comments.

Formed in 2015 as a coalition of dragon boaters, Guardians of Flushing Bay (GoFB) is a nonprofit organization advocating for a healthy and equitably accessible Flushing Bay and Flushing Creek (together, Flushing Waterways). We accomplish our goals by connecting residents with their local waterway through tours and events, managing community science and stewardship initiatives, repairing local habitats, and building and sustaining grassroots coalitions organizing for land use equity. GoFB is commenting in support of Riverkeeper, the SWIM Coalition and the Rise to Resilience Coalition's budget priorities for climate resilience solutions for NYC.

GoFB strongly urges the City's budget to reflect the reality that climate change is already here, affecting millions of residents today.

New York City has witnessed, firsthand, the risks and impacts that climate change poses to our residents, infrastructure, and natural resources. Flooding events are the most common climate-related hazard across the city¹ and nearly 14 percent of New Yorkers (about 1.3 million people) live within or adjacent to the 100-year floodplain.² Moreover, nearly 78 percent (about 7.2 million New Yorkers) have an urban heat index (UHI) of 8°F or higher, meaning that people in those census tracts feel at least 8°F more heat because of the local built environment.³

¹ Rebuild by Design. *Atlas of Disaster: New York*.

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³ Climate Central (July 2023) *Urban Heat Spots*,

<https://www.climatecentral.org/climate-matters/urban-heat-islands-2023>

Climate risks and impacts are no longer abstract or projections of the future. They are tangible, measurable, and while not avoidable anymore, we know there are critical policies, plans, and funds that can reduce the burden of impact on New Yorkers. In order to reduce the city's vulnerability to climate change, direct and bold action must be taken immediately. That starts with making critical investments in the City Budget toward a more resilient, equitable future.

To this end, GoFB recommends the following priorities for climate resilience and adaptation in the FY27 budget:

- 1) Fully fund the Department of Environmental Protection at \$2 Billion, including \$75 Million to restore agency staffing to pre-covid levels and fill 800 vacancies
- 2) Reject the \$313 Million Rental Payment from the NYC Water Board to ensure those funds are appropriately directed to water and sewer infrastructure
- 3) Allocate \$10 Million for DEP to complete the legislatively mandated comprehensive Stormwater Master Plan
- 4) Fund \$4 million to support full implementation of the Unified Stormwater Rule
- 5) Fully fund the Bureau of Coastal Resiliency at \$10 Million, for staffing, planning and operations
- 6) Allocate long-term funding for the City's current portfolio of climate resilience, such as the Cloudburst Management and Blubelt program, which includes initiatives in Corona and Kissena Park
- 7) Allocate \$10 Million to the Department of Citywide Administrative Services and DEP to complete the Renewable Rikers Master Plan
- 8) Fully fund the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice (MOCEJ) to develop a Five Borough Adaptation Plan as required by Local Law 122 and 149

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and for your work to ensure New Yorkers are protected from the impacts of the climate crisis. Please contact me at rpryor@guardiansofflushingbay.org to discuss these items in more detail with you at any point.

Sincerely,



Rebecca Pryor
Executive Director
Guardians of Flushing Bay



3/19/2026

TESTIMONIAL:

INNER CITY GREEN TEAM ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEVELOPMENT

PUBLIC HEARING:

**NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND
WATERFRONTS PRELIMINARY BUDGETARY HEARING**

**RE: RECYCLING OUTREACH/EDUCATION, WASTE DIVERSION, RAT MITIGATION,
REMOVING ON-SITE OPERATIONAL BARRIERS, EXPANDING RESIDENTIAL
RECYCLING PROGRAM AT NEW YORK CITY HOUSING AUTHORITY**

Greetings To All,

Thank you for the invitation to testify.

I am Brigitte Charlton-Vicenty, Founder and CEO of Inner City Green Team Economic & Environmental Development (ICGT), and a life-long NYCHA resident.

THE PROBLEM

1 in 17 New Yorkers live in New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) developments. Yet, nearly four decades after the 1989 NYC recycling law was passed, NYCHA residents continue to be excluded from equitable access to recycling services due to outdated infrastructure, inconvenient bin placement, capacity challenges within the Authority, and chronic underinvestment in sustainability solutions. Like other New Yorkers, NYCHA residents need and deserve access to NYC recycling programs to successfully tackle the city's waste problems in the country's largest public housing community.

NYCHA communities have some of the highest unemployment rates and are in critical need of jobs—56% of all working-age residents do not report income from employment. According to estimates, as many as 100,000 residents are without jobs.

BACK STORY

In 2006, I thought I was doing my civic duty as a law-abiding citizen when placing my recyclables in the designated bins at my development until I witnessed my recyclables being thrown away with the garbage. I was shocked to learn that all my efforts over the years were in vain, because recycling at NYCHA was nonexistent and had not complied with the NYC Recycling Law established 30 years earlier. After my revelation, I began taking my recyclables outside of NYCHA to be recycled, but my lone efforts were just a drop in the bucket. I knew more had to be done.

I had a vision to create an opportunity to establish a recycling program and submitted a proposal to the Authority when I came across a NYCHA posting urging residents to get involved with then Commissioner Lopez's "Green Agenda". Consequently, I activated the Resident Green Committee (RGC) at Mott Haven Houses with the vision of fulfilling the Commissioner's agenda to "help green public housing."

Towards that end:

- I held public meetings and events to raise awareness and educate NYCHA residents about recycling and energy efficiency.
- Conducted door-to-door surveys to ascertain residents interested in learning and participating in a recycling program.
- Partnered with Mother's On The Move and organized a recycling rally to mobilize residents around the issue
- Created the Right to Recycle Collection Initiative, which proposed a unique solution for NYCHA to comply with the recycling law.

THE PILOT

In 2018, ICGT won the international competition, **NYCx Co-Lab Challenge: Zero Waste in Shared Space**, demonstrating the potential of resident-led solutions. During the six-month pilot in Brownsville, Brooklyn, recycling rose from 0% to 8% in four months, with over **sixteen tons** of recyclables diverted. Although the pilot proved to be successful, no further support was offered from the long list of City agencies that sponsored the competition. Only through my crowdfunding efforts, operations continued for an additional year, proving the model's scalability and expandability.

For over 14 years, ICGT's mission has focused on cultivating climate awareness and waste equity on (NYCHA) public housing campuses. My [non-profit] organization has been committed to protecting the environment, advancing residents' rights to recycle, and transforming the lives of residents through green job training and paid work that can lead to a lifetime of employment and civic engagement.

ICGT's environmental justice service model directly addresses the disproportionate environmental burdens in low-income communities and empowers residents to participate in sustainability on a hyper-local level in **every age group**.

One of our many accomplishments includes earning formal recognition that helped inform legislation under the NYS Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) and New York City's Local Law 49 -2017 (LL49), sponsored by then-Sanitation Committee Chair Letitia James. These policies helped address long-standing recycling inequities and establish a more just framework for the Right to Recycle Collection Initiative.

Despite our contributions to environmental justice legislation and demonstrating success in advancing sustainability initiatives on NYCHA campuses, our frontline expertise has been largely excluded. This misalignment contradicts the CLCPA and LL49 mandates to prioritize disadvantaged communities and has failed to invest in resident-led solutions, workforce development, and scalable models grounded in our lived experience. If DSNY's waste management draft is serious about achieving the City's sustainability goals, these agencies must be accountable, invest in, and partner with frontline organizations who can translate policy into measurable outcomes.

ICGT WASTE DIVERSION INITIATIVES

Recycle to Right Collection Initiative offers **free** weekly at-your-door recycling collection year-round. To enroll residents, we provide speedy yet comprehensive educational workshops, distribute reusable Sort 'n' Store bags to sort materials, and literature to reinforce the practical skills in the comfort of their own homes. The closed-loop, zero-waste education system diverts a variety of materials from the waste stream, including metals, plastic, glass, paper, e-waste, textiles/household items, and organics. Our "service delivery" approach provides residents with **the most convenient, accessible, and engaging** at-your-door recycling collection experience. To date, over **212+ tons** have been diverted from landfills, but it could be so much more.

"Mini MRF" - manually sorting recyclables plays a critical role in decreasing contamination in high-density residential settings such as NYCHA campuses. Our on-site localized sorting process allows for 100% contaminate-free materials before entering the broader waste stream. This process prevents materials from being sent to landfill or incineration. Additionally, manual sorting creates opportunities for resident employment and hands-on education, reinforcing proper recycling behaviors while building accountability and local stewardship within the community.

Workforce Development trains and hires residents to engage their fellow residents. When fully expanded, our program can create hundreds of livable-wage jobs. Our community-rooted approach has created 24 green jobs, with five residents currently employed, which reflects our commitment to community-based leadership. This approach has created buy-in by being accessible to residents, maintaining consistent engagement at their doors, and fostering good relations with tenant leaders. Living and working within the communities establishes ICGT as a trusted advocate for change.

Re-Uza-Palooza-Thon™ collects, recycles, upcycles, and **donates gently used clothing, household items, books, toys, and shoes.** To **address the high rate of textile disposal,** we transitioned from two clothing swap/donation events per year to a weekly at-your-door service model. This service was sorely needed to amplify our closed-loop practices and reduce the amount of textiles being thrown in the trash. Since launching, the program has diverted over 30 tons of materials.

Other Peoples Plastic™ - processing and marketing post-consumer plastic to artists who transformed the recovered plastics into lighting, furniture, outdoor equipment, sculptures, and art installations.

Scrape-Ur-Plate™ allows residents to take ownership of their food waste by providing an **at-your-door food scrap pick-up service** and/or a free in-home food “pre-composter”. The program’s goal is to distribute devices at several NYCHA campuses in every borough. The pilot program will promote our mission to strengthen community involvement and awareness about food waste reduction and composting.

sRATegy™ Mitigation™ (“U Bred ‘Em, When U Feed ‘Em”) is a program and tagline that’s coupled with the Scrape-Ur-Plate™ organics program. It was designed to mitigate the rodent population by placing the onus on every citizen who disposes food waste improperly. The education workshop combines the strategic solution for rat reduction, coupled with the necessity to redirect food waste from being on the curb.

Rescuing Leftover Cuisine - as volunteers, we rescue fresh and healthy leftover food from commercial businesses and distribute it to communities struggling with food insecurity.

Plastic Bottle Waste Reduction - to reward participation and reduce plastic water bottle usage, we provide donated ZeroWater filtration systems.

E-Waste Collection - due to the lack of storage space on campus, we currently transport the e-waste to the LES Ecology Center events

WE ARE THE BLUEPRINT

What sets us apart is that our model is more than just waste diversion—it’s a system change. We’ve created the ability to tackle **one of the most persistent challenges in increasing recycling rates in New York City and NYC public housing.**

With nearly half a million residents, this community is one of the most challenging environments to implement effective recycling. While local agencies and officials have attempted narrow interventions and failed, ICGT has developed a solution that transforms barriers into opportunities- turning residents into environmental leaders. We are uniquely positioned because we have built an ecosystem for families who see themselves as the driving force of environmental justice in their communities.

Nowhere does a door-to-door recycling model like ICGT exist, combining service and intensive community engagement at this scale. Since our inception, ICGT has positioned itself at the forefront of innovation in recycling and community engagement. Our work is not just rooted in local impact and on-the-ground experience; it's backed by global research studying organizations worldwide that target specific materials or communities.

THE ASK

1) We respectfully urge all City agencies involved to:

- Precise details as to what recycling strategies DSNY has specifically implemented on NYCHA campuses.
- Execute **formal MOUs** between DSNY, NYCHA, and community-based implementers to clarify roles in recycling education, compliance support, and enforcement readiness.
- Create a dedicated line item in the NYC waste management budget to fund and implement ICGT's community-based scope of work.
- Connect with policymakers and present proof of impact to activate Local Law 49
- Track and publicly report **Local Law 49 -2017** compliance metrics, including recycling participation rates, contamination reduction, and diversion levels.

Fully invest in ICGT environmental programs that support:

- Ensuring all NYCHA residents have convenient access to NYC recycling services
- A workforce training program leading to green job opportunities
- Consistent access to on-site recycling outreach and education
- On-site programs supporting community engagement and rewards systems for compliance

Funding and technical gaps:

- Expanding our core initiatives to NYCHA campuses citywide
- Compensating our labor force and training additional potential hires
- Textile retail store to create career opportunities
- Additional workspace(s) to scale plastic reclamation studio to increase production
- Resident Environmental Action Leaders (R.E.A.L.) initiative to increase community engagement
- Increased visibility to secure corporate sponsorships
- Developing a workforce model to equip NYCHA residents with soft skills and technical training
- Implementation of Phase I of the South Bronx Pact for Art and Reclamation Knowledge (S.P.A.R.K).

The oxymoron presents itself when New Yorkers are asked to make a difference, but are met with incredible resistance and disenfranchisement. **A quote from the great physicist and civil rights advocate Albert Einstein states, "insanity is doing the same thing over and over, but expecting a different result."**

The outcry for justice took place long before city agencies came to the realization that environmental noisemakers would only get louder.

Despite our contributions to environmental justice legislation and demonstrating success in advancing sustainability initiatives on NYCHA campuses, our frontline expertise has been largely excluded. This misalignment contradicts the state and local legislative mandates to prioritize disadvantaged communities and has failed to invest in resident-led solutions, workforce development, and scalable models grounded in our lived experience.

Without intentional inclusion of proven community-based proposals, city agencies will continue the practice of implementing ineffective climate policies that reinforce systemic inequalities rather than dismantling them.

If City agencies are serious about achieving the City's sustainability goals, these agencies must be accountable, invest, and partner with frontline organizations who can translate policy into measurable outcomes.

Your attention and collaborative action is appreciated.

Brigitte Charlton-Vicenty
Founder/CEO/Exec. Director

Brigitte Charlton-Vicenty

Inner City Green Team Economic & Environmental Development, Inc.
innercitygreenteam.org



PUBLIC TESTIMONY OF National Clean water Collective

March 19, 2026

New York City Council Committee on Environmental Protection and Waterfronts Preliminary Budgetary Hearing

Submitted by Jada Johnson, Volunteer Coordinator, National Clean Water Collective

My name is Jada Johnson, and I am the volunteer coordinator at the National Clean Water Collective. Thank you, Chair Gennaro, and members of the Environmental Protection and Waterfront Committee, for the opportunity to submit testimony. I am testifying today in support of the [Rise to Resilience \(R2R\) Coalition](#) and their budget priorities for climate resilience solutions for New York City. R2R is a campaign and coalition, comprised of more than 100 organizations representing residents; leaders in business, labor and justice; volunteers; scientists; environmental advocates; and design professionals collectively calling on our federal, state, and local governments to make climate resilience an urgent priority.

The Rise to Resilience Coalition strongly urges the City's budget to reflect the reality that climate change is already here, affecting millions of residents today.

New York City has witnessed, firsthand, the risks and impacts that climate change poses to our residents, infrastructure, and natural resources. Flooding events are the most common climate-related hazard across the city¹ and nearly 14 percent of New Yorkers (about 1.3 million people) live within or adjacent to the 100-year floodplain.² Moreover, nearly 78 percent (about 7.2

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RISE TO RESILIENCE

OUR COMMUNITIES, OUR FUTURE

million New Yorkers) have an urban heat index (UHI) of 8°F or higher, meaning that people in those census tracts feel at least 8°F more heat because of the local built environment.³

Climate risks and impacts are no longer abstract or projections of the future. They are tangible, measurable, and while not avoidable anymore, we know there are critical policies, plans, and funds that can reduce the burden of impact on New Yorkers. In order to reduce the city's vulnerability to climate change, direct and bold action must be taken immediately. That starts with making critical investments in the City Budget toward a more resilient, equitable future.

Climate resilience involves repairing, maintaining, and innovating physical infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, transportation, and buildings. It also involves expanding technical capacity within the local agencies with regards to risk mitigation, emergency management, and socioeconomic vulnerabilities in the face of observed and projected climate change impacts. Climate resilience efforts also include raising awareness through educational programs and campaigns. This cannot be tackled without explicit line items in the City's budget dedicated towards climate resilience programs.

Especially in the current context of federal rollbacks on climate regulation and funding, local leadership and funding on climate resilience cannot be lost or minimized. The time to prepare for climate change has been ongoing and the City has yet to take the critical steps necessary to reflect this priority across all agencies and through its budgeting processes.

Moreover, without investment, the financial costs of climate impacts will be a burden to the City and to all New Yorkers. **Studies estimate that the costs of climate change across New York will rise to \$10 billion annually by 2050.⁴ And yet, the costs of inaction are far greater. Studies estimate that the cost of inaction in the state will be \$55 billion in the next decade for coastal storms and flood-event-related damages.⁵**

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RISE TO RESILIENCE

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The Rise to Resilience Coalition recommends the following five priorities for climate resilience and adaptation in the FY27 budget:

- 1) Allocate DEP's budget for the Bureau of Coastal Resilience in FY27 to \$10 million, of which \$5 million would support 45 new staff positions and \$5 million would go toward developing a compound flood model and other long-term planning efforts.** The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is responsible for upgrading critical drinking and stormwater infrastructure, as well as coastal resiliency infrastructure across New York City. We applaud the formation of a new Bureau of Coastal Resilience within DEP, as part of commitments made in the latest PlaNYC. The Rise to Resilience Coalition also encourages the Council to introduce legislation to codify this office into permanent existence, and to lead the governance of coastal resilience for the City. Given the large portfolio of this office, we are calling for the City to fund the office with adequate permanent staff.
- 2) Allocate long-term funding for the City's current portfolio of climate resilience, such as the Cloudburst Management and Bluebelt program, and expand funding for new projects such as Resilient Acquisitions.** For instance, we applaud the 2023 expansion of the Cloudburst Program, investing \$390 million at four new sites. Future expansion of the program should not exclude at-risk communities with high water tables, as projects around the city, such as the Arverne East project in Rockaway, have proven green infrastructure to be effective in reducing the impact of intense rainfall despite the high water table. Additionally, we recommend expansion of the Bluebelt program, like the new projects at Kissena Park and Prospect Park. The Coalition strongly supports NYC DEP's Bluebelt Program, which preserves natural drainage corridors including streams, ponds, and wetlands, and enhances them to perform their functions of conveying, storing, and filtering runoff precipitation or stormwater. The program has been implemented successfully on Staten Island and we encourage the city to invest in the program so more neighborhoods can benefit. Regarding the Resilient Acquisitions program, the City should leverage the \$250 million investment from the New York State Environmental Bond Act, and identify other sources of funding, to support the implementation of a voluntary buyout program, as well as all its education, mental health and counseling services, and financial assistance components. As one of the many solutions we need in the face of the climate crisis, the Rise to Resilience Coalition strongly supports voluntary buyouts. We appreciated that the City committed to launching a voluntary buyout program in the latest

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PlaNYC and has established the Resilient Acquisitions program. However, these types of programs can only be successful with large, committed, and dedicated long-term funding. We encourage the city to identify other sources of funding to establish a permanent, voluntary buyout program.

- 3) **Reject the water rental payment in the FY27 budget.** A major concern in the FY27 budget is related to the water rental payment charge. The water rental payment is a regressive tax that originated at a time when there was substantial debt related to the water and sewage systems. The debt has since been rectified, making this payment outdated and unnecessary. Additionally, the rental payment takes funds generated by water ratepayers and transfers them to the City's general fund. These funds are critical for supporting investments in water infrastructure. Forcing a payment upon the NYC Water Board further strains DEP's budget and handcuffs the City's ability to respond to climate change. A more equitable route would be to restructure water utility rates to consider the contribution to stormwater runoff. Currently, water rates do not capture the permeability or impermeability of surfaces. By separately and fairly categorizing stormwater runoff, the City will benefit from designated revenues for stormwater management, as well as the creation of an incentive program(s) for green infrastructure and other strategies that reduce flooding events. In fact, the New York City Independent Budget Office released a research report on November 2023, which estimated that the City could receive revenue ranging from \$266 million to \$892 million per year from a similar structure as other major U.S. cities like Seattle, Baltimore, and Philadelphia.⁶
- 4) **Fully fund the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice (MOCEJ) to complete the planning and engagement required to fulfill Local Law 122 and 149, and develop a Five Borough Adaptation Plan.** There is an urgent need for comprehensive, long-term planning for climate resilience in New York City, which will dictate how funding can and should be spent. The Rise to Resilience Coalition partners led the advocacy around Local Law 122, which established a Five Borough Climate Adaptation Plan to be led by the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice (MOCEJ). This plan should include recommendations for resilience and adaptation

⁶ New York City Independent Budget Office (November 2023). *Raindrops Keep Falling On New York: Potential Implications Of a Stormwater Fee In New York City.*
<https://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/raindrops-keep-falling-on-new-york-potential-implications-of-a-stormwater-fee-in-new-york-city-november-2023.pdf>

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measures to protect residents, property, and infrastructure throughout the city. It would identify areas that are highly vulnerable to climate hazards to help determine where resiliency and adaptation measures should first be implemented. Now, after the recent passage of Local Law 149, this adaptation plan will be completed as part of the City's longer term sustainability plan, PlaNYC. The Coalition strongly urges MOCEJ to develop and publish a long-term climate adaptation plan.

- 5) **We encourage the City Council to allocate \$1.2 million for cooling center funding in the Mayor's proposed budget for Local Law 128 of 2025, which codifies the city's Cooling Center program for heat emergencies.** As climate change progresses, the city is experiencing more frequent, intense, and prolonged heat waves. These extreme heat events can lead to severe health issues, including dehydration, heat exhaustion and stroke, and even death. Vulnerable populations, such as the elderly, individuals with pre-existing health conditions, and those living in poorly ventilated housing, are particularly at risk. In fact, extreme heat is the leading cause of weather-related fatalities in the United States, and New York City sees an average of 520 heat-related deaths annually⁷. Addressing this issue is critical to reducing health risks and improving the well-being of all New Yorkers. Cooling Centers are a critical emergency resource. As such, the program should be protected from cuts and provided with additional funding to expand operating hours beyond regular schedules on activation days. Analysis by the Independent Budget Office shows Cooling Center hours drop off significantly on weekday evenings and weekends, leaving heat vulnerable communities with no lifeline.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and for your work to ensure New Yorkers are protected from the impacts of the climate crisis. The Rise to Resilience Coalition is willing and looking forward to partnering with the City Council to advance any and all of these recommendations and initiatives. I am happy to discuss these items in more detail with you at any point.

⁷ Mayor's Office of Climate & Environmental Justice – Extreme Heat Adaptation, [Extreme Heat - NYC Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice](#)



PUBLIC TESTIMONY OF SYRAH SCOTT / NATIONAL CLEAN WATER COLLECTIVE

March 19, 2026

New York City Council Committee on Environmental Protection and Waterfronts Preliminary Budgetary Hearing

Submitted by Syrah Scott, Executive Chairman, National Clean Water Collective

My name is Syrah Scott, and I am the Executive Chairman at the National Clean Water Collective. Thank you, Chair Gennaro, and members of the Environmental Protection and Waterfront Committee, for the opportunity to submit testimony. I am testifying today in support of the [Rise to Resilience \(R2R\) Coalition](#) and their budget priorities for climate resilience solutions for New York City. R2R is a campaign and coalition, comprised of more than 100 organizations representing residents; leaders in business, labor and justice; volunteers; scientists; environmental advocates; and design professionals collectively calling on our federal, state, and local governments to make climate resilience an urgent priority.

The Rise to Resilience Coalition strongly urges the City’s budget to reflect the reality that climate change is already here, affecting millions of residents today.

New York City has witnessed, firsthand, the risks and impacts that climate change poses to our residents, infrastructure, and natural resources. Flooding events are the most common climate-related hazard across the city¹ and nearly 14 percent of New Yorkers (about 1.3 million people) live within or adjacent to the 100-year floodplain.² Moreover, nearly 78 percent (about 7.2 million New Yorkers) have an urban heat index (UHI) of 8°F or higher, meaning that people in those census tracts feel at least 8°F more heat because of the local built environment.³

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Climate resilience involves repairing, maintaining, and innovating physical infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, transportation, and buildings. It also involves expanding technical capacity within the local agencies with regards to risk mitigation, emergency management, and socioeconomic vulnerabilities in the face of observed and projected climate change impacts. Climate resilience efforts also include raising awareness through educational programs and campaigns. This cannot be tackled without explicit line items in the City's budget dedicated towards climate resilience programs.

Especially in the current context of federal rollbacks on climate regulation and funding, local leadership and funding on climate resilience cannot be lost or minimized. The time to prepare for climate change has been ongoing and the City has yet to take the critical steps necessary to reflect this priority across all agencies and through its budgeting processes.

Moreover, without investment, the financial costs of climate impacts will be a burden to the City and to all New Yorkers. **Studies estimate that the costs of climate change across New York will rise to \$10 billion annually by 2050.⁴ And yet, the costs of inaction are far greater. Studies estimate that the cost of inaction in the state will be \$55 billion in the next decade for coastal storms and flood-event-related damages.⁵**

The Rise to Resilience Coalition recommends the following five priorities for climate resilience and adaptation in the FY27 budget:

- 1) **Allocate DEP's budget for the Bureau of Coastal Resilience in FY27 to \$10 million, of which \$5 million would support 45 new staff positions and \$5 million would go toward developing a compound flood model and other long-term planning efforts.**

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OUR COMMUNITIES, OUR FUTURE

The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is responsible for upgrading critical drinking and stormwater infrastructure, as well as coastal resiliency infrastructure across New York City. We applaud the formation of a new Bureau of Coastal Resilience within DEP, as part of commitments made in the latest PlaNYC. The Rise to Resilience Coalition also encourages the Council to introduce legislation to codify this office into permanent existence, and to lead the governance of coastal resilience for the City. Given the large portfolio of this office, we are calling for the City to fund the office with adequate permanent staff.

- 2) **Allocate long-term funding for the City's current portfolio of climate resilience, such as the Cloudburst Management and Bluebelt program, and expand funding for new projects such as Resilient Acquisitions.** For instance, we applaud the 2023 expansion of the Cloudburst Program, investing \$390 million at four new sites. Future expansion of the program should not exclude at-risk communities with high water tables, as projects around the city, such as the Arverne East project in Rockaway, have proven green infrastructure to be effective in reducing the impact of intense rainfall despite the high water table. Additionally, we recommend expansion of the Bluebelt program, like the new projects at Kissena Park and Prospect Park. The Coalition strongly supports NYC DEP's Bluebelt Program, which preserves natural drainage corridors including streams, ponds, and wetlands, and enhances them to perform their functions of conveying, storing, and filtering runoff precipitation or stormwater. The program has been implemented successfully on Staten Island and we encourage the city to invest in the program so more neighborhoods can benefit. Regarding the Resilient Acquisitions program, the City should leverage the \$250 million investment from the New York State Environmental Bond Act, and identify other sources of funding, to support the implementation of a voluntary buyout program, as well as all its education, mental health and counseling services, and financial assistance components. As one of the many solutions we need in the face of the climate crisis, the Rise to Resilience Coalition strongly supports voluntary buyouts. We appreciated that the City committed to launching a voluntary buyout program in the latest PlaNYC and has established the Resilient Acquisitions program. However, these types of programs can only be successful with large, committed, and dedicated long-term funding. We encourage the city to identify other sources of funding to establish a permanent, voluntary buyout program.

RISE TO RESILIENCE

OUR COMMUNITIES, OUR FUTURE

- 3) **Reject the water rental payment in the FY27 budget.** A major concern in the FY27 budget is related to the water rental payment charge. The water rental payment is a regressive tax that originated at a time when there was substantial debt related to the water and sewage systems. The debt has since been rectified, making this payment outdated and unnecessary. Additionally, the rental payment takes funds generated by water ratepayers and transfers them to the City's general fund. These funds are critical for supporting investments in water infrastructure. Forcing a payment upon the NYC Water Board further strains DEP's budget and handcuffs the City's ability to respond to climate change. A more equitable route would be to restructure water utility rates to consider the contribution to stormwater runoff. Currently, water rates do not capture the permeability or impermeability of surfaces. By separately and fairly categorizing stormwater runoff, the City will benefit from designated revenues for stormwater management, as well as the creation of an incentive program(s) for green infrastructure and other strategies that reduce flooding events. In fact, the New York City Independent Budget Office released a research report on November 2023, which estimated that the City could receive revenue ranging from \$266 million to \$892 million per year from a similar structure as other major U.S. cities like Seattle, Baltimore, and Philadelphia.⁶

- 4) **Fully fund the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice (MOCEJ) to complete the planning and engagement required to fulfill Local Law 122 and 149, and develop a Five Borough Adaptation Plan.** There is an urgent need for comprehensive, long-term planning for climate resilience in New York City, which will dictate how funding can and should be spent. The Rise to Resilience Coalition partners led the advocacy around Local Law 122, which established a Five Borough Climate Adaptation Plan to be led by the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice (MOCEJ). This plan should include recommendations for resilience and adaptation measures to protect residents, property, and infrastructure throughout the city. It would identify areas that are highly vulnerable to climate hazards to help determine where resiliency and adaptation measures should first be implemented. Now, after the recent passage of Local Law 149, this adaptation plan will be completed as part of the City's

⁶ New York City Independent Budget Office (November 2023). *Raindrops Keep Falling On New York: Potential Implications Of a Stormwater Fee In New York City*.
<https://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/raindrops-keep-falling-on-new-york-potential-implications-of-a-stormwater-fee-in-new-york-city-november-2023.pdf>

RISE TO RESILIENCE

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longer term sustainability plan, PlaNYC. The Coalition strongly urges MOCEJ to develop and publish a long-term climate adaptation plan.

- 5) **We encourage the City Council to allocate \$1.2 million for cooling center funding in the Mayor's proposed budget for Local Law 128 of 2025, which codifies the city's Cooling Center program for heat emergencies.** As climate change progresses, the city is experiencing more frequent, intense, and prolonged heat waves. These extreme heat events can lead to severe health issues, including dehydration, heat exhaustion and stroke, and even death. Vulnerable populations, such as the elderly, individuals with pre-existing health conditions, and those living in poorly ventilated housing, are particularly at risk. In fact, extreme heat is the leading cause of weather-related fatalities in the United States, and New York City sees an average of 520 heat-related deaths annually⁷. Addressing this issue is critical to reducing health risks and improving the well-being of all New Yorkers. Cooling Centers are a critical emergency resource. As such, the program should be protected from cuts and provided with additional funding to expand operating hours beyond regular schedules on activation days. Analysis by the Independent Budget Office shows Cooling Center hours drop off significantly on weekday evenings and weekends, leaving heat vulnerable communities with no lifeline.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and for your work to ensure New Yorkers are protected from the impacts of the climate crisis. The Rise to Resilience Coalition is willing and looking forward to partnering with the City Council to advance any and all of these recommendations and initiatives. I am happy to discuss these items in more detail with you at any point.

⁷ Mayor's Office of Climate & Environmental Justice – Extreme Heat Adaptation, [Extreme Heat - NYC Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice](#)

From: [National Clean Water](#)
To: [Testimony](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] ATTN: Written Testimony Submission – Rise to Resilience Coalition (3.19.26)
Date: Friday, March 20, 2026 9:52:07 PM
Importance: High

Good Day Chair Gennaro and Members of the Committee,

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony during the hearing. I also want to sincerely thank Chair Gennaro for his kind remarks and acknowledgment of my testimony, I truly appreciate it.

My name is Syrah Scott, Founder and Executive Chairman of the National Clean Water Collective. I am writing to formally submit my testimony in support of the Rise to Resilience Coalition and to emphasize a critical gap in our current climate and infrastructure investments, which is community level water safety.

At the National Clean Water Collective, we work directly in communities providing water education, testing and sampling, and implementing pipe replacements and water filtration systems in areas where residents are already at risk.

What we are seeing is clear. Aging infrastructure, environmental exposure, and limited access to testing are leaving communities without real time information about the quality of their water.

In New York City, buildings constructed before 1961 may still have lead service lines or plumbing components, with the highest risk in older housing stock. This makes community based testing, education, and filtration systems essential to protecting public health. Climate resilience cannot stop at large scale infrastructure. It must include what is happening at the tap.

We are urging the Council to allocate funding for community based water testing programs, public education, and point of use filtration systems in high risk neighborhoods. These are cost effective, immediate interventions that protect public health while larger infrastructure projects are underway.

We also encourage the City to partner with organizations already doing this work to expand reach, improve data collection, and ensure resources are reaching the communities that need them most.

If we are serious about resilience, we must ensure that every New Yorker has access to safe, reliable, and trusted water.

Thank you for your time, leadership, and continued commitment to protecting New Yorkers. We look forward to working in partnership to advance equitable water solutions across our communities.

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Kind Regards,

Syrah

National Clean Water Collective

General Inquiries | [REDACTED]

Twitter: @USACleanWater

Linktree: www.linktr.ee/nationalcleanwatercollective

Facebook & Instagram: @NationalCleanWaterCollective

4th Annual Pen PALs Forum: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PlrOCATWiziRrWvymaowV4ScLYvJfxv/view?usp=drivesdk>



**Testimony of Audie Soucy, Staff Attorney at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest
to the New York City Council Committee on Environmental Protection and Resiliency
on March 19, 2026, regarding the New York City FY27 Budget**

My name is Audie Soucy, and I am a Staff Attorney in the Environmental Justice Program at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI). Thank you Chair Gennaro and members of the Council for the opportunity to testify today.

New York City’s FY 2027 Preliminary Budget

In recent years, the City Council has played a critical role in defending vital city services, investments, and infrastructure from budget cuts and flatlining. We appreciate the Mamdani administration’s transparency about the major fiscal challenges facing New York City. In recent years, the City Council has played a critical role in defending vital city services, investments, and infrastructure from budget cuts and flatlining.

We offer the following comments on the FY27 Preliminary Budget for the Department of Environmental Protection, which plays a critical role in advancing environmental justice and protecting public health.

Today, I would like to discuss the critical issue of sewer backups and flooding. Sewer infrastructure is becoming increasingly overwhelmed by intense rainfall because of climate change. When the sewers are full, sewage can backup into a home and come up through showers, sinks, toilets, and basement drains. As noted in the Mayor’s Management Report, there were nearly 3000 sewer backup complaints in the first four months of Fiscal Year 2026, which is a 23 percent increase from the same period of Fiscal 2025.¹

Communities in which the city has historically invested less money and resources disproportionately bear the burdens of flooding and sewage backups. Sewer backups have become routine in some neighborhoods in Queens. The Department of Environmental Protection reported 12,548 total sewer backup complaints in Fiscal Years 2020-2024.² Close to 5,000 of those complaints came from Queens residents, compared to fewer than 400 from Manhattan residents.³

Some of these communities, such as in South Jamaica, rely upon sharing private sewer lines that private developers installed decades ago. These communities tend to be predominantly Black,

¹ See “New York City Council Fiscal 2027 Preliminary Plan, Department of Environmental Protection Budget Overview,” p. 7.

² “State of the Sewers 2024 Performance Metrics,” Department of Environmental Protection, January 2025, p. 7. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/3d8dcxmz>

³ *Id.*, pp. 11-12.

Brown, an ongoing legacy of historic redlining. One such neighborhood is in Southeast Queens, on 106 Road and 107 Avenue. Residents there desperately needs the city to provide what most residents in New York already have – a safe, functioning public sewage line.⁴ Without this public sewage line, residents in South Jamaica will continue to face horrid sewer backups, leaving them with an unsafe, unhealthy, and inhumane living environment.

After years of advocacy by those impacted, DEP committed to constructing a public sewer line within “3 or 4 years” during an August 9, 2023, meeting with the homeowners and their elected leaders. However, we later heard through Borough President Richards’ office that would be pushed back for years for unknown reasons. For over a year now, NYLPI has tried to get updates on the timeline of the project, with little to no response from DEP. This has left the residents unable to accurately plan for how much to invest in maintaining their private line, or in making financial arrangements to do so. In the meantime, these residents continue to regularly experience sewer backups.

We ask the Committee to ensure that DEP has the funds it needs to address these types of critical capital projects in disadvantaged communities like South Jamaica. DEP must complete the planning and construction of this project without delay, and make transparent for all stakeholders the costs, design, and timeline of the project in line with its promises.

Transparency and communication with DEP have been longstanding issues for our community partners and clients. We hope this will be improving since the passage of Local Law 70, which requires DEP to create a dashboard communicating the status of DEP projects, and Local Law 87, which creates a task force to report on the implementation of the Southeast Queens flooding adaptation plan. NYLPI thanks Chair Gennaro for his leadership in pushing for transparency and accountability through the passage of these local laws, and we look forward to more open communication under the leadership of Commissioner Garcia.

Audie Soucy
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New York Lawyers for the Public Interest
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About New York Lawyers for the Public Interest

For 50 years, New York Lawyers for the Public Interest (NYLPI) has been a leading civil rights advocate for New Yorkers marginalized by race, poverty, disability, and immigration status. Through our community lawyering model, we bridge the gap between traditional civil legal services and civil rights, building strength and capacity for both individual solutions and long-

⁴ The twenty-one affected addresses are: 177-50, 177-54, 177-56, 177-58, 177-60, 177-62, 177-64, and 177-66 106th Road, and 178-09, 178-11, 178-13, 178-19, 178-23, 178-25, 178-27, 178-29, 178-31, 178-33, 178-35 107th Ave., Jamaica, New York, 11433.

term impact. Our work integrates the power of individual representation, impact litigation, and comprehensive organizing and policy campaigns. Guided by the priorities of our communities, we strive to secure environmental justice for low-income communities of color, achieve equality of opportunity and self-determination for people with disabilities, create equal access to health care and ensure immigrant opportunity and strengthen local nonprofits.

For more information visit: www.nylpi.org

New York City Council Committee on Environmental Protection and Waterfronts

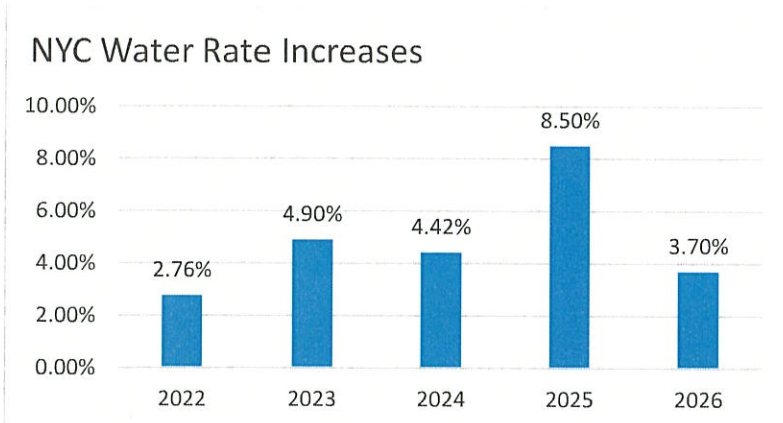
March 19, 2026

Good afternoon. My name is Brendan Cheney. I am Director of Policy and Operations at the New York Housing Conference (NYHC). I would like to thank the Committee for the opportunity to testify about the FY 2027 preliminary budget.

NYHC is a nonprofit affordable housing policy and advocacy organization. As a broad-based coalition, our mission is to advance City, State and Federal policies and funding to support the development and preservation of decent and affordable housing for all New Yorkers.

NYHC and many of our partners in affordable housing have been sounding the alarm about affordable housing properties facing distress – with costs rising faster than projected, and income slower than projected. A recent study by Enterprise Community Partners and LISC found that more than half of the 428 affordable housing projects in their portfolios (totaling 37,130 units) have negative cash flow with costs greater than income. There are multiple causes of the growing distress, and one of them is large increases in water rates. Affordable housing buildings are drowning in high water bills.

One solution to help affordable housing in distress therefore is to control increases in water rates. Over the past five years, water rates have increased by nearly 5 percent per year on average, including an 8.5 percent increase in 2025. [According to UNHP](#), who has been leading advocacy efforts about water rates for affordable housing for the past 30 years, estimates that without a change in policy, water payments will be \$2,000 per unit per year by 2030, leaving affordable housing buildings over their head in water costs.



One cause of high and increasing water rates has been the City’s decision to collect a rental payment from the Water Board. This effectively results in the water rate payers giving money to the City’s general fund, with nearly \$300 million

going to the City in FY 2026. Rate payers should not be subsidizing the City's general fund and the rental payment should stop.

In 2015, the City created the [Multi-Family Water Assistance Program](#) which provides \$250 per apartment per year credit towards an eligible building's water bill. In the most recent year, the City allocated \$16.25 million for the program, supporting up to 68,000 apartments. This program is a lifesaver for many.

Given the extent of the distress in affordable housing, the following steps are needed to help control water rates.

- Manage increases in water rates: We call on DEP and the Water Board to maintain minimal increases in water rates.
- The City should stop collecting a rental payment from the Water Board and rate-paying customers.
- Increase the Multi-Family Water Assistance Program per-apartment credit to \$500. The current \$250 credit has not increased since the start of the program over 10 years ago.
- Increase the Multi-Family Water Assistance Program budget to \$100 million to serve a total of 200,000 apartments in the program. The program is typically over-subscribed and eligible properties are turned away.
- Revise the regulatory agreement term to 3 years, the building must have a regulatory agreement with at least 15 years remaining. This program should be open to buildings with less time left in their regulatory agreement.
- Extend the renewal requirement from an annual to a multi-year period to reduce paperwork.

With these proposed changes, the City can take one of the many steps necessary to protect the city's affordable housing – protecting the City's investment and helping protect tenants and affordable housing buildings keep their head above water.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I am happy to answer any questions.



**Testimony of Alia Soomro, Deputy Director for New York City Policy
New York League of Conservation Voters
City Council Committee on Environmental Protection and Waterfronts
FY27 Preliminary Budget Hearing
March 19, 2026**

My name is Alia Soomro and I am the Deputy Director for New York City Policy at the New York League of Conservation Voters (NYLCV). NYLCV is a statewide environmental advocacy organization representing over 30,000 members in New York City. Thank you, Chair Gennaro, as well as members of the Committee on Environmental Protection for the opportunity to comment.

As our city experiences heat waves, extreme rainfall and flooding, droughts, and sea level rise—which disproportionately impacts vulnerable New Yorkers—local environmental leadership matters more than ever. With numerous fiscal challenges facing the City, including the uncertainty of federal funding, NYLCV stresses that the City must not lose sight of important climate deadlines and goals. It is imperative that we pass a City budget that is not only bold on climate, but paves the path towards a just and equitable future.

For FY27, NYLCV urges the City to provide robust funding for the NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Mayor’s Office of Climate and Environmental Justice (MOCEJ) programs and staffing to fully implement climate and environmental justice laws and programs.

Eliminate the Proposed Water Rental Payment

First, NYLCV stands with advocates calling on the Mamdani Administration and City Council to reject the water rental payment in the FY27 budget. The Adams Administration reintroduced the full water rental payment in 2024, taking a \$289 million rental payment for FY25 and adding that to the City’s general fund, for unspecified, non-water-related purposes. From 2026 through 2029, the City plans to charge the Water Board more than \$1.3 billion in rent over four years to lease the water system from the City, including \$303 Million in FY26.

The water rental payment is a regressive tax that originated at a time when there was substantial debt related to the water and sewage systems. Under the 1985 lease agreement between the City and the Water Board, the City—at the mayor’s discretion—may request a rental payment from the Water Board for use of the city’s water lines. Originally, this rental payment was used to pay off the principal and interest payable on general obligation bonds

issued by the City for water and sewer purposes.¹ Although those bonds have been paid off since 2004, mayoral administrations have continued to take a rental payment at the expense of water ratepayers.

After a pause from 2017 to 2023, the Adams Administration reintroduced the full rental payment in 2024 purportedly to fund rising costs of caring for asylum seekers. This means DEP's water payment revenue will be handed over to the City general fund for non-water-related purposes instead of staying with DEP, where they can direct it towards capital infrastructure projects.

While the City has done this in the past, NYLCV believes this is a poor policy decision, especially given the urgency of the climate crisis. Capital funding for water infrastructure is urgently needed to address critical stormwater flooding, support coastal resiliency, improve water quality and strengthen drinking water infrastructure in New York City.

A more equitable route would be to restructure water utility rates to consider the contribution to stormwater runoff. Currently, water rates do not capture the permeability or impermeability of surfaces. By separately and fairly categorizing stormwater runoff, the City will benefit from designated revenues for stormwater management, as well as the creation of an incentive program(s) for green infrastructure and other strategies that reduce flooding events. In fact, the New York City Independent Budget Office released a research report in November 2023, which estimated that the City could receive revenue ranging from \$266 million to \$892 million per year from a similar structure as other major U.S. cities like Seattle, Baltimore, and Philadelphia.²

Diverting funds dedicated for water infrastructure also makes it harder for the City to access State clean water funding by sending the message that investing in clean water infrastructure is not something we value. This especially impacts parts of the City that have historically been neglected and will suffer the brunt of more frequent extreme weather events due to the ongoing climate crisis. DEP needs to keep this revenue to make essential infrastructure upgrades, especially in parts of the City that have historically been neglected and will suffer the brunt of climate change. **We strongly encourage the City Council and Administration to reject the \$1.3 billion water rental payment in the City budget.**

Fund DEP Infrastructure Projects

NYLCV also supports allocating long-term funding for the City's current portfolio of climate resilience, such as the Green Infrastructure, Cloudburst Management, and Blubelt Programs.

¹ Paige, J., Gudino, V., Defelice, G., & Mendez, J. L. (2024). (rep.). New York City's Water and Sewer System: Examining Rate Setting and Billing Structures. Retrieved from <https://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/new-york-citys-water-and-sewer-system-examining-rate-setting-and-billing-structures-october-2024.pdf>.

² New York City Independent Budget Office (November 2023). *Raindrops Keep Falling On New York: Potential Implications Of a Stormwater Fee In New York City*. <https://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/raindrops-keep-falling-on-new-york-potential-implications-of-a-stormwater-fee-in-new-york-city-november-2023.pdf>

As stated in our [2026 NYC Policy Agenda](#), the City must continue to explore ways to reduce Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) through green infrastructure projects such as rain gardens, bioswales, water squares, green and blue roofs, river daylighting, and permeable pavement that help absorb stormwater, purify the air, and mitigate the urban heat island effect. These projects should be expanded and implemented equitably so that all neighborhoods can receive the environmental benefits that come with them, with priority for frontline communities that have borne the brunt of environmental racism and climate injustices, including NYCHA campuses.

Moreover, the City must continue updating and modernizing our sewer system and wastewater treatment process to prevent CSOs from dumping unregulated contaminants in our waterways. Both of these goals are aligned with initiatives in [PlaNYC: Getting Sustainability Done](#), such as reducing CSOs by more than 4 billion gallons per year by 2045 and developing a strategy to end the discharge of untreated sewage into the New York Harbor by 2060.

Additionally, we recommend expansion of the Bluebelt Program, like the new projects at Kissena Park and Prospect Park. The Bluebelt Program preserves natural drainage corridors such as streams, creeks, and ponds, and reconstructs them to help control, storm, or filter stormwater runoff. Bluebelts also provide open green space and a habitat for wildlife. This program has been implemented successfully on Staten Island and we encourage the city to invest in the program so more neighborhoods can benefit.

Cloudburst infrastructure is designed to manage extreme rainfall events too intense for traditional stormwater infrastructure, such as stormwater retention basins and permeable pavements. For instance, we applaud the 2023 expansion of the Cloudburst Program, investing \$390 million at four new sites. Future expansion of the program should not exclude at-risk communities with high water tables, as projects around the city, such as the Arverne East project in Rockaway, have proven green infrastructure to be effective in reducing the impact of intense rainfall despite the high water table.

The City also needs to strengthen the coordination of planning and maintaining our parks and green infrastructure systems. Unlike traditional types of playgrounds and pavements that contribute to flooding and the urban heat island effect, parks and playgrounds with green infrastructure features help absorb or hold large volumes of stormwater, especially as storms and extreme rainfall become more frequent and severe with climate change.

Moreover, as a member of the New York City Coalition to End Lead Poisoning (NYCCELP), we urge the City to enforce its commitment to eliminating lead poisoning by ensuring robust resources are available to City agencies. As outlined in [NYCCELP's 2024 Lead Agenda](#), we urge the City to continue allocating funding for DEP's water monitoring program and Lead Service Line Replacement Program. While these programs are important, we need the City to go further and pass legislation to establish a mandatory lead service line (LSL) removal program within ten years *at no cost to residents*. This legislation should allow for occupants of a residence to consent to the work. This legislation should be coupled with long-term funding by

the city (i.e., as a capital expense, just like other major water projects such as replacing water mains).

Implement and Fully Fund Climate and EJ Laws and Policies

NYLCV urges the City to prioritize environmental justice and equity in all of its climate and environmental planning, implementation, and policies. We support DEP's prioritization of areas that have been historically overburdened and underinvested in and urge the City to provide robust funding for DEP's mitigation efforts to combat odors and truck traffic problems from treatment plants located in EJ areas.

As advocated by other advocates, we urge the City to adequately fund and timely implement the Renewable Rikers Act (Local Laws 16, 17, and 31 of 2021), which could pave the way for installing a wastewater treatment facility, community composting facilities, and a solar farm on the island, potentially generating as much as 14 megawatts of renewable energy, and the City's Environmental Justice for All laws (Local Laws 60 and 64 of 2017) in order to meet these important deadlines. NYLCV looks forward to the release of the City's first-ever Environmental Justice Plan this year.

NYLCV echoes the call by the Rise to Resilience Coalition to fully fund the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice to complete the planning and engagement required to fulfill Local Law 122 of 2021 and 149 of 2025, and develop a Five Borough Adaptation Plan. There is an urgent need for comprehensive, long-term planning for climate resilience in New York City, which will dictate how funding can and should be spent. The Rise to Resilience Coalition partners led the advocacy around Local Law 122, which established a Five Borough Climate Adaptation Plan to be led by MOCEJ. This plan should include recommendations for resilience and adaptation measures to protect residents, property, and infrastructure throughout the city. It would identify areas that are highly vulnerable to climate hazards to help determine where resiliency and adaptation measures should first be implemented. Now, after the recent passage of Local Law 149 of 2025, this adaptation plan will be completed as part of the City's longer term sustainability plan, *PlaNYC*. We urge MOCEJ to develop and publish a long-term climate adaptation plan.

NYLCV appreciated that the City committed to launching a voluntary buyout program in the latest *PlaNYC* and has subsequently established [the Resilient Acquisitions program](#). This type of program can only be successful with large, committed, and dedicated long-term funding, therefore, we encourage the city to identify other sources of funding to establish a permanent, voluntary buyout program. Part of this means the City should leverage the \$250 million investment from the New York State Environmental Bond Act, and identify other sources of funding, to support the implementation of a voluntary buyout program, as well as all its education, mental health and counseling services, and financial assistance components. We also encourage the Administration to begin working with residents, and regional, state, and federal officials to identify funding and proactively begin stakeholder engagement and education. The city should also consider what happens to the land post-buyout, such as wetland and open space restoration, as well as site remediation if the land was contaminated.

Prioritize Agency Staffing

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, NYLCV stresses the importance of providing sufficient funding for DEP and MOCEJ hiring and retention. With numerous climate-related laws, policies, and programs these agencies must develop and implement, it is vital they have robust resources to carry them through. According to the [Environmental Protection Committee Report](#), DEP has a vacancy rate of 12.5 percent as of January 2026.

NYLCV also supports increasing DEP's budget for the Bureau of Coastal Resilience in FY27 to \$10 million, of which \$5 million would support 45 new staff positions and \$5 million would go toward developing a compound flood model and other long-term planning efforts. We applaud the formation of a new Bureau of Coastal Resilience within DEP, as part of commitments made in the latest *PlaNYC*. Given the large portfolio of this office, we are calling for the City to fund the office with adequate permanent staff.

Budgets express priorities and we must make our priorities clear: climate change is here and we must be doing everything in our power to fight it and protect New Yorkers, especially for frontline communities. NYLCV urges the City to prioritize funding for DEP and MOCEJ staffing to fully implement a coordinated and unified approach to the City's climate and environmental justice efforts.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.



PUBLIC TESTIMONY OF RESILIENT RED HOOK

March 19, 2026

New York City Council Committee on Environmental Protection and Waterfronts Preliminary Budget Hearing

Submitted by Victoria Alexander, chair, Resilient Red Hook

My name is Victoria Alexander, and I am the Chair at Resilient Red Hook, a community-based organization working at the intersection of waterfront advocacy, climate resilience, and neighborhood equity in Red Hook, Brooklyn. Thank you, Chair Gennaro, and members of the Environmental Protection and Waterfront Committee, for the opportunity to submit testimony on the FY27 preliminary budget.

Resilient Red Hook is a community-based organization rooted in Red Hook, Brooklyn—one of New York City's most flood-vulnerable waterfront neighborhoods. Red Hook is home to approximately 11,000 residents, including thousands of families in the Red Hook Houses, the largest public housing complex in Brooklyn. The neighborhood sits at or near sea level, is nearly entirely within the 100-year floodplain, and is surrounded on three sides by water. Red Hook was devastated by Superstorm Sandy in 2012, and our community has been fighting ever since to secure the resilience investments needed to protect our neighbors from the next major storm—which scientists tell us will be more frequent and more severe as the climate crisis worsens.

Resilient Red Hook urges the City's budget to reflect the reality that climate change is already here, affecting millions of residents today.

For Red Hook, this is not a future risk—it is a present emergency. Flooding events remain the most common climate-related hazard across the city, and our neighborhood has borne a disproportionate share of that burden. Our residents live with the twin threats of coastal storm surge from the Upper New York Bay and chronic stormwater flooding from combined sewer overflows (CSOs) that discharge into the Buttermilk Channel and Gowanus Bay. These physical hazards fall on a community already carrying a heavy environmental justice burden. Red Hook is officially designated a Disadvantaged Community under New York State's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA)—a recognition that our neighborhood faces compounding environmental harms alongside economic hardship and limited adaptive capacity. Red Hook is also identified as a Community of Concern for elevated diesel particulate matter in regional freight planning studies, reflecting decades of exposure to truck traffic, port operations, and industrial activity that have degraded air quality for our residents. These overlapping designations are not abstractions: they mean that Red Hook residents—disproportionately low-income, majority Latino and Black, many living in NYCHA public housing—are among the New Yorkers least able to absorb the costs of climate inaction and most in need of prioritized public investment. The FY27 budget must treat Disadvantaged Community status as a mandate for equitable funding allocation, not merely a label.

Especially in the current context of federal rollbacks on climate regulation and funding, local leadership and investment in climate resilience cannot be lost or minimized. The FY27 City budget must reflect Red Hook's urgency and the urgency of every waterfront and flood-prone community across New York City.

Resilient Red Hook urges the Council to advance the following budget priorities for FY27, each of which carries particular significance for our community:

1) Allocate DEP's budget for the Bureau of Coastal Resilience in FY27 to \$10 million, of which \$5 million would support 45 new staff positions and \$5 million would go toward developing a compound flood model and other long-term planning efforts.

Resilient Red Hook strongly supports fully funding DEP's new Bureau of Coastal Resilience (BCR). The BCR's work is directly consequential for Red Hook: the Bureau is responsible for advancing DEP's coordination with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on the NY & NJ Harbor and Tributaries Study (HATS), the regional storm surge barrier study that represents the most comprehensive long-term coastal protection for communities like ours. DEP's Long Range Vision (2025) committed the BCR to developing Coastal Resilience Action Plans for neighborhoods, targeting 50% of environmental justice areas by 2035. Red Hook—a low-income, majority-minority neighborhood surrounded by water—must be among the first communities served. A compound flood model is also urgently needed: Red Hook faces simultaneous threats from storm surge, tidal flooding, and stormwater overwhelm, and no current model fully captures this compound risk. We urge the Council to fund this office at the full \$10 million requested and to introduce legislation codifying it as a permanent City agency.

2) Allocate long-term funding for the City's current portfolio of climate resilience projects, expand funding for new projects, and require DEP to develop a cloudburst management strategy specifically tailored to communities with high water tables—including dedicated funding to implement and expand the groundwater flood risk mapping required under Intro 1244-2025.

Sustained capital funding is essential for both the ongoing Red Hook Coastal Resiliency (RHCR) project now under construction by DDC and the broader portfolio of stormwater and flooding investments our neighborhood urgently needs. We applaud the 2023 expansion of the Cloudburst Program, investing \$390 million at four new sites. However, we are deeply concerned that the current Cloudburst Program design has not adequately grappled with a critical constraint that affects Red Hook and similar low-lying waterfront neighborhoods: a high and rising groundwater table.

In neighborhoods where the water table sits close to the surface, conventional cloudburst solutions—subsurface infiltration basins, underground retention chambers, and deep dry wells—do not function as designed. Water cannot infiltrate into already-saturated soils, so stormwater has nowhere to go. During a heavy rain event, surface flooding persists and water backs up through the combined sewer system, compounding the crisis. As geophysicist Klaus H. Jacob of Columbia University documented in a March 2026 report on rising groundwater levels in NYC, Red Hook has experienced multiple groundwater flood events in the past decade, particularly after severe or prolonged precipitation—yet it is not included in the current USGS/DEP groundwater study, which focuses only on Queens and Staten Island. This is an unacceptable gap. Red Hook sits at or near sea level, bordered by tidal waterways, atop

soils that are frequently saturated—conditions that will worsen as sea levels rise and groundwater tables rise with them.

Jacob also documents the broader citywide data crisis underlying this problem. The cooperative USGS-DEP groundwater monitoring program largely ceased in the 2010s, leaving a sparse, discontinuous, and incomplete dataset. NYC's precipitation flood maps—while a step in the right direction—do not explicitly account for groundwater depth below the surface. The RAINPROOF NYC plan developed by MOCEJ, DEP, and partner agencies represents a promising overarching vision, but as Jacob notes, its working groups' outputs remain largely unfunded mandates. Without dedicated budget alignment, this citywide vision will not translate into actual risk reduction for neighborhoods like Red Hook.

Members of the City Council recognized this threat and introduced Intro 1244-2025 in April 2025, which would require DEP to identify areas at risk of groundwater flooding, add them to the flood hazard area map, and update those maps as new data become available. The bill has not moved since introduction. Resilient Red Hook urges the Council to advance Intro 1244-2025 and to fund its implementation in FY27—including the groundwater monitoring infrastructure, modeling capacity, and community engagement needed to make it real. Critically, Red Hook must be included in any groundwater flood risk mapping effort from the outset.

DEP must develop and deploy alternative cloudburst approaches suited to high-water-table conditions: above-grade retention features, surface-flow routing, tidal-cycle-aware storage, and other strategies that do not depend on infiltration into saturated soils. We also urge the City to expand the FloodNet NYC real-time street flood monitoring network—currently approximately 200 sites citywide—to its planned capacity of 500 sites, with priority deployment in Red Hook and other groundwater-vulnerable neighborhoods. As Jacob's report notes, early investment in risk mitigation is far more cost-effective than responding to compounding damage: the National Institute of Building Sciences has found that every dollar invested in hazard mitigation saves an average of six dollars in future losses. The FY27 budget must begin funding these solutions in earnest.

3) Expand the City's Bluebelt program to other boroughs.

The Bluebelt Program's model of preserving and enhancing natural drainage corridors is exactly the kind of nature-based infrastructure investment that coastal Brooklyn needs. DEP's Long Range Vision (2025) commits to building blue belts throughout the five boroughs—we urge the Council to fund this commitment in FY27 and to identify appropriate sites in the Red Hook watershed and along the Gowanus Canal corridor. These investments would complement ongoing grey infrastructure work and help reduce the CSO burdens that regularly foul our waterways.

4) Direct the \$250 million New York State Environmental Bond Act investment and all other available resilience funds toward protecting residents in place—not toward buyout and displacement programs that contradict the City's own development plans.

Resilient Red Hook does not support a voluntary buyout program as a primary climate resilience strategy for our neighborhood. Red Hook is a rooted, working-class community. Our residents—many of whom have lived here for generations, and thousands of whom live in the Red Hook Houses as permanent public housing tenants—are not seeking to leave. They are seeking to be protected where they live. A buyout program that displaces long-term residents from a Disadvantaged Community already

scarred by decades of disinvestment and environmental harm is not resilience. It is managed abandonment.

The contradiction at the heart of any buyout proposal for Red Hook is made starker by the City's own actions: the Administration is simultaneously planning and permitting new development in and around our neighborhood, including at the Brooklyn Marine Terminal. You cannot in good conscience ask existing low-income residents of color to relocate for climate safety while approving new construction and new residents in the same flood zone. That is not a resilience policy—it is a displacement policy dressed in climate language. The communities most harmed by that approach are precisely the Disadvantaged Communities the CLCPA was designed to protect.

We urge the Council to redirect the \$250 million State Environmental Bond Act investment and any other available resilience funding toward what Red Hook actually needs: completing the Red Hook Coastal Resiliency project in full, advancing the groundwater and stormwater investments described above, hardening and elevating NYCHA infrastructure at the Red Hook Houses, and funding community-led resilience capacity. Protect the people who are already here. That is the only equitable path forward.

5) Reject the water rental payment in the FY27 budget, restructure water utility rates to include a dedicated stormwater fee, and direct those revenues toward finally resolving DEP's decades-old open CSO compliance obligations—including the outfalls that discharge directly into Red Hook's waterways.

The water rental payment is a regressive and outdated tax that diverts funds generated by water ratepayers away from critical infrastructure investment and into the City's general fund. For a neighborhood like Red Hook—where DEP stormwater and sewer investments are urgently and chronically underfunded—every dollar diverted through this mechanism has a direct human cost. We urge the Council to eliminate this payment and to restructure water utility rates to separately and fairly categorize stormwater runoff. As the NYC Independent Budget Office's November 2023 report found, a dedicated stormwater fee structure modeled on cities like Seattle, Baltimore, and Philadelphia could generate between \$266 million and \$892 million per year—revenues that should be dedicated to the stormwater and CSO investments New York City has been deferring for decades.

Those deferred obligations are not abstract. DEP operates under a framework of combined sewer overflow (CSO) compliance requirements rooted in consent orders and SPDES permits—including SPDES Permit NY0027073, reissued in 2022—that have been open and only partially fulfilled for over twenty years. The original DEP-DEC consent order framework governing NYC's combined sewer overflows dates to 2005. Nearly all of those CSO outfalls that discharge into Buttermilk Channel and Gowanus Bay are in Red Hook's backyard. The SPDES permit explicitly requires DEP to implement Best Management Practices to minimize water quality impacts from CSO discharges at these Red Hook outfalls. Twenty years on, untreated sewage still flows into our surrounding waters during heavy rain events—contaminating the waterfront our residents use, posing public health risks for a Disadvantaged Community, and undermining the water quality that any working or recreational waterfront requires. The record on delivery is alarming. The two CSO storage tanks called for by EPA's 2013 Record of Decision for the Gowanus Canal Superfund site—which is fed in part by overflows and runoff from the Red Hook sewershed—are documented by EPA's own

Inspector General as already six-and-a-half years behind schedule, with costs ballooning from an original estimate of \$78 million to over \$1 billion, a 1,300% increase. The OIG attributes these delays to years-long defunding of the Owls Head tank design, interagency disputes, and the City's own pursuit of alternative approaches that were not agreed upon with EPA. While those tanks serve Gowanus Canal directly, they sit in the same drainage system and sewer shed that serves Red Hook—and every year of delay prolongs contamination exposure for our neighborhood.

DEP's Long Range Vision (2025) commits to eliminating CSOs in all but the most severe storm events by 2060—thirty-five more years from now. For a community that has been living with these discharges for over half a century, that timeline is not a plan; it is a continuation of managed neglect. The FY27 budget must reflect a different standard of urgency. We urge the Council to: (1) reject the water rental payment and establish a dedicated stormwater fee; (2) direct those revenues explicitly toward accelerating CSO compliance for Red Hook-adjacent outfalls, including the Bond-Lorraine sewer system and Buttermilk Channel and Gowanus Bay outfalls; (3) require DEP to publish a transparent, enforceable remediation schedule for all open CSO permit obligations in environmental justice communities; and (4) treat the 20-year-plus delay in resolving these obligations as the environmental justice failure it is.

6) Allocate funding for the planning and engagement required to fulfill Local Laws 122 and 149, and develop a Five Borough Adaptation Plan.

Red Hook has been the subject of a remarkable number of plans, studies, and recommendations since Superstorm Sandy—from NY Rising to IFPS to RHCR—yet a comprehensive, long-range neighborhood-level climate adaptation plan aligned with citywide strategy remains incomplete. The Five Borough Climate Adaptation Plan required by Local Law 122, now to be incorporated into PlaNYC under Local Law 149, must genuinely address the cumulative and compound risks facing neighborhoods like ours. We urge MOCEJ to develop and publish this plan without further delay, and we urge the Council to fund the planning, data, and community engagement capacity required to do so. Red Hook's Community Climate Action Plan process—currently underway—should serve as a model for community-led resilience planning across the city.

7) Allocate \$1.2 million for cooling center funding under Local Law 128 of 2025—and commit capital funding to replace the Red Hook Recreation Center before its 2027 closure leaves the neighborhood entirely without a cooling center.

Red Hook's elderly residents—particularly the thousands of seniors living in the Red Hook Houses—are among the most vulnerable New Yorkers during extreme heat events. The neighborhood's urban heat island conditions and limited tree canopy compound this risk. Extreme heat is the leading cause of weather-related fatalities in the United States, and New York City sees an average of 520 heat-related deaths annually. Cooling Centers are not a convenience—they are life-saving emergency infrastructure. Funding them adequately, and ensuring they are accessible when people need them most, is a basic obligation of government to a Disadvantaged Community.

For Red Hook, this obligation is about to become a crisis. The Red Hook Recreation Center—currently the neighborhood's only designated cooling center—is scheduled to close in 2027. When it does, Red Hook will be left with no cooling center at all. This is not a gap in service; it is the complete elimination of a critical safety resource for a low-income, majority-minority waterfront neighborhood that is already among the city's most

heat-vulnerable. No community that has been designated a Disadvantaged Community under the CLCPA should be left without cooling infrastructure as the climate crisis intensifies. The closure of the Red Hook Recreation Center without a funded replacement is precisely the kind of inequitable outcome the Council must intervene to prevent.

Resilient Red Hook urges the Council to take two actions in the FY27 budget: (1) fund the Cooling Center program at \$1.2 million as required under Local Law 128 of 2025, and expand operating hours on activation days—existing analysis showing Cooling Centers are underutilized on weekday evenings and weekends is especially alarming for a community like ours; and (2) commit capital funding now for a replacement community facility in Red Hook that can serve as a permanent, full-service cooling center before the Recreation Center closes in 2027. Waiting until the doors close to begin planning is not acceptable. The FY27 budget must include both the operating dollars and the capital commitment to ensure Red Hook is not left behind.

Additional Budget Priorities Specific to Red Hook

Beyond the citywide priorities above, Resilient Red Hook urges the Council to ensure the FY27 budget addresses the following Red Hook-specific priorities:

A) Replace the piecemeal RHCR approach with a fully funded, peninsula-wide coastal resilience plan that treats Red Hook, the Columbia Street Waterfront, and Gowanus as a single hydrologic system—from Brooklyn Heights around to the Gowanus Canal.

Resilient Red Hook supports the goal of coastal flood protection for our neighborhood. But we have serious and well-grounded concerns that the Red Hook Coastal Resiliency (RHCR) project as currently designed will not achieve that goal—and may, under certain storm scenarios, actually leave the community worse off. The FY27 budget should not simply fund Phase 2 of RHCR on autopilot. It should fund a rigorous, community-engaged planning process to evaluate whether the project as designed is truly protective, and to develop the peninsula-wide resilience framework Red Hook actually needs.

The core problem is the bathtub effect. Red Hook is a peninsula, surrounded on three sides by water. A partial flood barrier—one that protects Beard Street and Atlantic Basin but leaves the neighborhood's flanks and back door open—does not stop a major storm surge. It redirects it. Water that cannot enter from the front will push through the Gowanus Canal to the east, through low-lying inland passes to the north, and through any gaps in the line of protection. In a Sandy-scale event or larger, an incomplete barrier system can actually trap floodwaters inside the neighborhood, turning a damaging flood into a catastrophic one. As the City's own climate science panel has noted, a 100-year storm at today's sea level would reach at least 11 feet—and with mid-century sea-level rise, Red Hook would need barriers in the 15 to 18 foot range. Experts quoted in recent reporting have characterized the 10-foot RHCR scheme as "at best temporary" and "not designed for major floods, not even our contemporary major floods."

This is not an argument against flood protection—it is an argument for doing it right. Red Hook cannot be protected street by street or alignment by alignment. The neighborhood sits at the tip of a peninsula, and it must be planned as one. A genuine resilience plan for Red Hook requires a connected system of protection running from Brooklyn Heights south along the Columbia Street Waterfront, around the Red Hook

peninsula, and continuing to the Gowanus Canal—closing the bathtub rather than partially filling it. That is precisely the logic behind the Army Corps of Engineers' preferred HATS alternative (Alt 3B), which calls for a 200-foot storm surge barrier at the Gowanus Canal combined with approximately 18,500 linear feet of shore-based tie-ins. The HATS framework treats this coastline as what it is: a connected system requiring a connected solution.

The equity dimensions of the current approach are also unacceptable. The City is simultaneously building RHCR to only a 10-foot standard for Red Hook's existing low-income, majority Black and Latino community, while planning documents for the Brooklyn Marine Terminal redevelopment contemplate a private coastal barrier system reaching approximately 21 feet—for a future market-rate development. This is a two-tier protection regime, in which new affluent waterfront residents would be walled off to 21 feet while NYCHA families and long-time working-class neighbors are left behind a line that experts already regard as obsolete. It is not acceptable that cost-benefit formulas calibrated to property values—rather than human safety—have produced a lower standard of protection for a Disadvantaged Community.

Resilient Red Hook urges the Council to fund the following in FY27: (1) an independent engineering review of the RHCR project's actual protective capacity under Sandy-scale and larger storm scenarios, including explicit modeling of back-door and flank flooding through the Gowanus Canal and northern approaches; (2) a peninsula-wide coastal resilience planning study that evaluates protection alignments from Brooklyn Heights to Gowanus as a single connected system, at design elevations adequate for mid-century sea-level rise (not less than 15 feet); (3) DEP's full and active participation in the USACE HATS process, with explicit advocacy for shore-based tie-ins that connect to and reinforce—rather than conflict with—any local protection measures; and (4) a commitment that no further RHCR capital expenditure will proceed without a public accounting of how Phase 2 fits within—or is superseded by—a holistic peninsula-wide plan. Red Hook deserves protection that actually works.

B) Funding for DEP engagement in the USACE NY & NJ Harbor and Tributaries Study (HATS) and coordination with the RHCR project.

The HATS study represents the most consequential long-term coastal protection planning process for New York Harbor. Its preferred alternative (Alt 3B) includes a storm surge barrier at the Gowanus Canal and approximately 18,500 linear feet of shore-based tie-ins affecting Red Hook. DEP must be adequately funded to participate meaningfully in HATS and to ensure that local infrastructure investments like RHCR are coordinated with—not rendered obsolete by—harbor-wide protections. We urge dedicated funding for this coordination role within DEP's Bureau of Coastal Resilience budget.

C) Investment in community capacity-building and community-based organization (CBO) integration into emergency preparedness planning.

Superstorm Sandy demonstrated that community-based organizations like Red Hook Initiative were often the first—and most effective—responders in our neighborhood. Yet over a decade later, CBOs remain insufficiently integrated into OEM's formal emergency planning and response structures. The FY27 budget should include dedicated funding for CBO emergency preparedness partnerships, consistent with the long-standing recommendations of PlaNYC (2013) and the NY Rising Community Reconstruction

Program. Formalized MOUs, training support, and emergency supply pre-positioning for Red Hook's CBOs are long-overdue investments.

D) Preservation of the maritime and industrial waterfront at the Brooklyn Marine Terminal (BMT) and South Brooklyn Marine Terminal (SBMT)—no residential conversion of working waterfront lands.

Any proposal to convert the Brooklyn Marine Terminal and adjacent working waterfront lands to residential use would be deeply inconsistent with the City's climate resilience commitments and with the controlling regional freight plan. The NYMTC Moving Forward 2055 Regional Freight Plan (adopted September 2025) explicitly maps BMT as a marine cargo reactivation site. Regional freight planning studies have determined that converting freight land to non-freight uses is effectively irreversible at a regional scale. Introducing residential density in this FEMA-designated flood zone—immediately adjacent to the active Gowanus Canal Superfund site and an existing industrial corridor—would expose future residents to serious flood and environmental health risks. Resilient Red Hook urges the Council and the Administration to honor existing planning commitments: protect and invest in the working waterfront, advance a genuine peninsula-wide resilience plan, and ensure that any redevelopment proposals at BMT are subject to the most rigorous environmental review available. Red Hook is not a generic development site. It is a federally designated Environmental Justice community, a state-designated Disadvantaged Community under the CLCPA, and a Community of Concern for diesel particulate matter under regional freight planning frameworks. Each of these designations carries legal and moral weight. Together, they mean that decisions made about this neighborhood—about who gets protected, who bears pollution burdens, and whose land is developed—are subject to heightened scrutiny and demand enforceable equity commitments. The FY27 budget must reflect that standard. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. Red Hook is a federally designated Environmental Justice community, a state-designated Disadvantaged Community under the CLCPA, and a Community of Concern for diesel particulate matter—a neighborhood that has carried compounding environmental burdens for decades and has waited far too long for the investments it is owed. The priorities we have outlined today are not aspirational. They are urgent, documented, and grounded in over a decade of planning, science, and community advocacy. Resilient Red Hook is eager to partner with the City Council to advance them. The FY27 budget is an opportunity to match the City's climate commitments with the resources our community needs to survive and thrive. I am happy to discuss any of these items in more detail.

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RIVERKEEPER®

March 19, 2026

New York City Council Committee on Environmental Protection and Waterfronts Preliminary Budgetary Hearing

Submitted by Em Ruby, Senior Coordinator, Riverkeeper

My name is Em Ruby, and I am the New York City Advocacy and Policy Coordinator at Riverkeeper. Thank you, Chairperson Gennaro and Members of the New York City Council Committee on Environmental Protection, Resiliency and Waterfronts, for your leadership in improving water quality and strengthening climate resiliency, and for the opportunity to testify today.

Riverkeeper would also like to acknowledge the ongoing efforts of the NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) staff to adapt to the myriad challenges and conditions they face on a daily basis as they implement the City's multi-pronged approach to address the negative impacts on our city from stormwater runoff, climate change, and sea level rise. The dedicated staff at DEP have made a commendable effort to sustain an ongoing and productive dialogue with stakeholders as they've implemented the various phases of the city's long-term plans to reduce the negative impacts of polluted stormwater runoff and combined sewer system overflows in NYC.

Riverkeeper is a member-supported watchdog organization dedicated to protecting and restoring the Hudson River, including its tributaries, expanding recreational access in waters throughout New York City, and safeguarding drinking water supplies, through advocacy rooted in community partnerships, science and law.

New York City is on the frontlines of climate change, and New Yorkers today face serious, overlapping threats from rising sea levels, coastal storm surge, extreme rainfall and extreme heat. According to the most recent New York State Climate Impact Assessments, total annual precipitation in New York State is projected to increase by 6% to 17% by the end of the century, with the largest increases projected for New York City, the Catskills, and the lower Hudson River Valley¹.

¹

<https://nysclimateimpacts.org/explore-the-assessment/new-york-states-changing-climate/nysc-precipitation/>

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At the same time, the city's critical water infrastructure systems, many of which were built decades ago, require significant investment to maintain current levels of service and to expand capacity in order to meet the challenges posed by today's changing climate.

Such investments include in drinking water source protection, where emerging contaminants like disinfection byproducts are threatening the efficacy of New York City's Filtration Avoidance Determination for the Catskill-Delaware Supply. They also include significant capital costs to upgrade the city's sewer infrastructure to prevent the worst damage from stormwater flooding, and funding to protect residents from coastal storm surge.

The city must balance the need for infrastructure investment with the ongoing affordability crisis that New Yorkers face. That's why Riverkeeper is calling on the administration and Council to focus on making water rates more affordable for all by taking key steps to modernize our water rates. That includes supporting the Rain Ready NY act in Albany to ensure that city is able to make water rates more equitable while adjusting how New Yorkers pay to manage stormwater; ending the rental payment from the NYC waterboard; and protecting our unfiltered water supply and relieving rate payers from having to pay billions for filtration.

The federal government's unprecedented attacks on climate mitigation and resiliency, on clean air, clean water, and environmental justice, are upending decades of work to improve public health and the environment. Now more than ever, we need bold leadership from the New York City Council and this Administration to ensure that adequate funding and resources are provided to critical agencies to protect existing ecosystems and to prepare our city for a changing climate. Our testimony calls for Council support for eight critical priorities in this year's budget:

1. Fully fund the Department of Environmental Protection at \$2 Billion, including \$75 Million to restore agency staffing to pre-covid levels and fill 800 vacancies
2. Reject the \$313 Million Rental Payment from the NYC Water Board to ensure those funds are appropriately directed to water and sewer infrastructure
3. Allocate \$10 Million for DEP to complete the comprehensive Stormwater Master Plan, as mandated by Local Law 70 of 2025
4. Fund \$4 million to support full implementation of the Unified Stormwater Rule
5. Fully fund the Bureau of Coastal Resiliency at \$15 Million, for staffing, planning and operations
6. Allocate \$10 Million to the Department of Citywide Administrative Services and DEP to complete the Renewable Rikers Master Plan
7. Fully fund Ashokan Reservoir upgrades, including the Ashokan headworks project that is needed to repair the Delaware Aqueduct, and the Supplemental EIS for water discharges into the Lower Esopus Creek

8. Fully fund the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice (MOCEJ) to develop a Five Borough Adaptation Plan as required by Local Law 122 and 149

I. Fully fund the Department of Environmental Protection at \$2 billion

Riverkeeper strongly supports a \$2 billion budget for the New York City Department of Environmental Protection. This would restore the \$202 million in lost city, state and federal funding from DEP's Modified FY26 budget, which funds DEP at \$1.889 billion. A \$2 billion budget for DEP would support staff to upgrade and maintain critical infrastructure, stormwater management, drinking water source protection, wastewater management, and coastal resiliency to protect the city in the face of climate change. Eliminating the rental payment from the NYC Water Board would free up the needed \$313 million in FY27 to close the DEP's funding gap, and an additional \$1 billion through 2029.

Increasing DEP's budget to \$2 billion is crucial to ensuring that the agency is fully staffed and funded to move forward with the planning, development, operations and maintenance (O&M) of the city's critical water and climate infrastructure. One of the core responsibilities of the agency is to provide clean and safe drinking water to every New York City resident. Several threats to the source drinking water supply have been identified, including from disinfection byproducts (DBPs) and the overuse of road salts, and these threats are endangering the city's Filtration Avoidance Determination (FAD). With a new FAD to be negotiated in 2027, DEP must take steps to implement long term management plans to control DBPs and road salts in the watershed. Without investment, DEP could risk losing the FAD next year, triggering a short deadline to build and bring online a filtration plant that would cost ratepayers billions of dollars.

In addition to preserving pristine drinking water, it is also critical to invest in sewer systems to handle today's storms and meet current regulatory requirements, not to mention the more intense storms the city is likely to face due to climate change. New York City's aging sewer system is not designed to meet today's extreme weather, as storms like Tropical Storm Ida illustrated clearly. To address this, funding is needed to support DEP's programs to manage stormwater, including upgrading sewer systems and mains, combined sewer overflow (CSO) storage and reduction projects, and the Green Infrastructure Program designed to reduce flooding and divert stormwater from sewer systems. DEP has estimated that it will cost nearly \$30 billion to upgrade the city's sewer infrastructure to prevent the worst damage from stormwater flooding in 86 priority locations. This number is nearly equal to the entire ten-year capital budget for the agency, and it illustrates the scale of investment that DEP needs in order to provide the protection and service that New Yorkers deserve.

Increasing DEP's budget will further support funding for the operations and maintenance (O&M) of DEP's green infrastructure assets. Green infrastructure (GI) — or constructed soil, vegetation, and other stormwater infiltration practices — is the Swiss Army tool of fighting

climate change, reducing street flooding, improving water quality, and mitigating extreme heat. Currently, DEP's O&M budget for GI is less than 1% of the agency's budget. This significantly hampers the success of GI assets citywide to effectively manage stormwater. DEP, Parks and DOT regularly cite O&M costs as the reason for not implementing adaptive and effective green infrastructure solutions, although such arguments are never made for maintenance of roadways and other transportation infrastructure and gray infrastructure, all of which require O&M. Adequate funding would increase DEP's ability to site new green infrastructure citywide and would contribute substantially to the success of the program.

To address these needs, and the specific proposals outlined below, Riverkeeper urges the Council to fully fund DEP at \$2 billion.

II. Restore agency staffing to pre-covid levels and fill 800 vacancies

A \$2 billion budget for DEP will provide the funding needed to address the agency's historic 11% vacancy rate, by including \$75 million to fill nearly 800 positions. This high vacancy rate has strained existing staff, and presents significant budgetary risks for DEP, as it can lead to decreased efficiency and productivity for existing staff, and increase overtime costs. These vacancies also significantly impact DEP's ability to meet regulatory requirements and operational targets. This impacts the success of crucial programs to manage stormwater, wastewater, and drinking water, to improve water quality and to protect New Yorkers from flooding due to extreme rainfall and coastal storms. In order to operate effectively and fulfill the department's obligations, staffing for the agency needs to be funded and vacancies filled.

III. Reject the \$313 million rental payment from the NYC Water Board

Riverkeeper strongly urges the City Council to reject the proposed \$1.3 billion rental payment from the NYC Water Board over four years, from FY27-FY29, including \$313 million in FY27. This rental payment is the legacy of an outdated agreement that allows the Mayor to request payment from the Water Board, taking funds generated by water ratepayers intended to fund and maintain the city's water and sewer operations, and transferring them to the city's general fund. Originally, the rental payment was used to pay off bonds issued by the City for water and sewer purposes, but since 2004 those bonds have been paid off – and administrations have continued to take a rental payment at the expense of water ratepayers.

At a time when the rising costs of rent, groceries, and utilities are making New York unaffordable for many, increasing water rates to pay for a rental payment is a blow that hits low-income home owners particularly hard. In 2024 alone it was estimated that the rental payment taken by the Adams Administration resulted in an 3.1% increase in water rates for the public. This amounts to a regressive water tax on everyday New Yorkers, who pay for water not based on income or ability but based on usage. Looking ahead to May 2026, and through at least 2028, New Yorkers can expect continued yearly impact on their water rates as a result of the rental payment.

Capital funding for water infrastructure is urgently needed to address critical stormwater flooding, support coastal resiliency, improve water quality and strengthen drinking water infrastructure in New York City. In the 10-year Capital Improvement Program released by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) last year, there was an estimated need of \$33 billion dollars for wastewater, stormwater and drinking water programs. By taking billions of dollars in the form of a rental payment, the administration is taking desperately needed funds and threatening the long term resilience of the city. This especially impacts parts of the City that have historically been neglected and will suffer the brunt of more frequent extreme weather events due to the ongoing climate crisis.

The rental payment is further hampering infrastructure investment by weakening the city's ability to go after state funding. Eliminating the rental payment will help New York City better leverage its fair share of NYS Environmental Bond Act funding. We cannot advocate in good faith for more state funding while our City continues to give away \$1.3 billion in rental payments over the next four years for non-water purposes.

While we work to find a legislative solution to end the rental payment, Riverkeeper calls on the Council to reject the \$313 million proposed rental payment in FY26.

IV. Allocate \$10 million for DEP to complete the legislatively mandated comprehensive Stormwater Master Plan

Under Local Law 70 of 2025, DEP is mandated to create a comprehensive Stormwater Master Plan that will recommend how much rainfall NYC's stormwater system should handle per hour, and identify projects necessary to achieve those levels and reduce flooding. However, DEP has not been funded to complete the Master Plan. This Master Plan is key to ensuring that DEP can respond effectively to increased stormwater flooding from extreme rainfall, and will help direct capital investment in stormwater management for the future. Riverkeeper urges the City to fully fund the Stormwater Masterplan, and provide \$10 million for three contracts.

V. \$4 Million to fully fund implementation of the Unified Stormwater Rule

Riverkeeper urges the City to support efforts to manage stormwater and rain induced flooding by providing \$4 million for implementation of the Unified Stormwater Rule (USWR). \$3 million of this funding will support 15 additional staff to support implementation of the rule, and \$1 million of this funding will support development of a new application platform and two IT staff to maintain it.

The USWR is a key 2021 rule that updated and aligned water quantity requirements in the city's combined sewer drainage areas with water quality requirements in separately sewered drainage areas, providing a comprehensive, citywide stormwater management policy for public and private development. It facilitates residential and industrial development in a sustainable way that prepares the city for major storms. The rule

mandates that newly developed or redeveloped properties disturbing 20,000 square feet or more of soil, or creating new impervious surfaces of 5,000 square feet or greater, must manage stormwater more effectively on-site. These properties must adopt a green-infrastructure-first strategy, utilizing methods such as rain gardens, permeable pavers, and green roofs.

By increasing the retention of stormwater on-site, the USWR aims to prevent the city's drainage system from becoming overwhelmed during heavy rain, which can cause flooding, backups into homes and businesses, and combined sewage overflows (CSOs) into waterways. Projections suggest that the rule will also reduce CSOs citywide by around 360 million gallons annually by 2030, improving harbor water quality.

When the USWR expanded from separately sewered areas of the city to include the combined sewer areas of the city, DEP never received additional staff or funding to staff the office. This has significantly impacted the implementation of the rule, leading to a longer timeline for permitting approval of new development – threatening the success of the program.

The Unified Stormwater Rule is key to ensuring the city is able to manage stormwater, reducing street flooding and improving water quality—and it is critical to meeting the city's nonnegotiable regulatory requirements. To support the effective implementation of the rule, \$4 million in funding is needed for additional staff.

VI. Provide \$15 million to fully staff the Bureau of Coastal Resiliency

Riverkeeper urges the City to approve \$15 million in funding to staff up the Bureau of Coastal Resiliency (BCR) and support resilience citywide. The Bureau of Coastal Resiliency was established in October 2023 to establish a dedicated bureau within DEP to lead and coordinate the planning, implementation and operation of the city's coastal resilience infrastructure, however it has not been properly funded to do so. This funding would provide \$5 million to fully staff the office with 45 new positions in planning and operations, and provide an additional \$10 million to develop a citywide coastal resilience plan and comprehensive flood model.

The \$5 million for staff includes funding for 20 operations and maintenance staff, as well as for 25 planners to begin work on a citywide plan. Currently, BCR is borrowing staff from other Bureaus within DEP to test and maintain the completed portions of the East Side Coastal Resiliency Project (ESCR). This is not a long term solution – without adequate testing and maintenance, ESCR and future completed resiliency projects could be at risk of failure during a Hurricane Sandy like storm. Baselined funding for operations and maintenance of coastal resiliency projects is desperately needed in the city budget if New York is to remain livable into the future.

Further, there is a great deal of uncertainty about the current federal administration's commitment to protect New York City from coastal storm surge. The Army Corps of Engineers' plan to protect the New York and New Jersey Harbor faces serious questions about funding and staffing to support the ongoing planning effort. Without federal planning for coastal resiliency protection, the city must step up and create its own comprehensive plan to protect New Yorkers.

Today, most of New York City is just as vulnerable to coastal storm surge as it was 14 years ago when Hurricane Sandy hit. As efforts continue to codify the Bureau of Coastal Resiliency into law, Riverkeeper urges the City to approve \$15 million in funding for the Bureau of Coastal Resilience to ensure that the City is ready for the next storm.

VII. Allocate \$10 Million to the Department of Citywide Administrative Services and Department of Environmental Protection to complete the Renewable Rikers Master Plan

As a member of the Renewable Rikers Coalition, Riverkeeper urges the City to include an additional \$10 Million to the Department of Citywide Administrative Services and DEP to complete the Renewable Rikers Master Plan in the FY27 Budget.

The Renewable Rikers Coalition seeks to address the historic and ongoing injustice on Rikers Island by closing the jails in August 2027, as required by Local Law 16 of 2021, and transforming the island into a sustainable center with renewable energy sources, wastewater treatment infrastructure, and food scrap and yard waste. Feasibility studies on Renewable Rikers released by the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice and the Department of Environmental Protection in the spring of 2024 illustrate the promise that Renewable Rikers provides, finding that :

- A wastewater treatment plant would save New Yorkers \$10 million over the lifetime of the plant, allowing for four nearby wastewater treatment plants to be used to treat high volumes of CSO during wet weather events. The new, energy-efficient treatment plant on Rikers Island would serve as the cornerstone for water quality improvements in the Upper East River, Harlem River and tributaries by reducing combined sewer overflows and restoring waters for safe swimming and fishing. The Renewable Rikers project is essential if the city is to achieve the goal as expressed in PlaNYC to eliminate sewage overflows by 2060.
- Solar energy production, an offshore wind energy converter station, and battery storage housed on the island could significantly increase the renewable energy produced by the city while potentially leading to the phasing out of five peaker power plants in the South Bronx and Eastern Queens. These peaker plants emit exorbitant levels of local pollutants like nitrogen oxides (NOx) and sulfur oxides (SOx), which contribute to bad local air quality and exacerbate health impacts on surrounding environmental justice neighborhoods.

- Organics processing could process over 365,000 tons of organic waste per year, 34% of NYC's total organic waste stream, and generate biogas increasing on-site renewable energy production for the island.
- A recycling hub could generate green jobs, remove polluting trucks from the road, and activate urban ecologies.

While these studies give us a sense of what the possibilities are, additional comprehensive planning will be needed to develop an actionable implementation plan for Renewable Rikers. Intro 1038 will require the City to take on this master planning process, and Riverkeeper stands with the Renewable Rikers coalition in urging the City to include \$10 million in funding in the FY27 budget.

VIII. Fully fund Ashokan Reservoir upgrades, including the Ashokan headworks project that is needed to repair the Delaware Aqueduct, and the Supplemental EIS for water discharges into the Lower Esopus Creek

As DEP looks to retain the FAD in 2027 and ensure our drinking water source infrastructure is functioning properly, funding is required to initiate the Ashokan Headworks Project, part of the Century Program. This project will upgrade and modernize valves, release works and other infrastructure at the Ashokan Reservoir, which is necessary for a successful repair of the Delaware Aqueduct which carries drinking water from the Catskill-Delaware system downstate.

The Ashokan Reservoir, while key to protecting drinking water for New York City residents, has had negative impacts on the Lower Esopus Creek and the communities that rely on it. Along with investing in the Ashokan Headwaters Project which will improve the health of the Lower Esopus, funding is needed to complete the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the state Catalum permit which allows for water discharges from the Ashokan. DEP has been working with communities in Ulster County for years to address concerns about the releases of water from the Ashokan Reservoir to the Lower Esopus Creek and this funding will create needed enforceable release protocols to balance the needs of the water supply with the needs of downstream communities and stream ecology.

IX. Fully fund the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice (MOCEJ) to develop a Five Borough Adaptation Plan as required by Local Law 122 and 149

As a member of the Rise to Resilience coalition, Riverkeeper strongly supports the call for comprehensive, long-term planning for climate resilience in New York City, and funding to support that planning process. The Rise to Resilience Coalition led the advocacy around Local Law 122, which established a Five Borough Climate Adaptation Plan to be led by the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice (MOCEJ). This plan should include recommendations for resilience and adaptation measures to protect residents, property, and infrastructure throughout the city. It would identify areas that are highly vulnerable to climate hazards to help determine where resiliency and adaptation measures should first

be implemented. Now, after the recent passage of Local Law 149, this adaptation plan will be completed as part of the City's longer term sustainability plan, PlaNYC. Riverkeeper stands with the Coalition strongly urging the city to fund, and MOCEJ to develop, a long-term climate adaptation plan.

Conclusion

The climate crisis is here, and New York City needs to adapt quickly to ensure that our communities and infrastructure are prepared for this generational challenge. In the last 12 years, Superstorm Sandy exposed the threat to New York City's coastlines from storm surge, Tropical Storm Ida underscored the vulnerability of inland communities to flash flooding from extreme rainfall, and rising summer temperatures have endangered the health of thousands of New Yorkers living in urban heat islands underserved by green infrastructure.

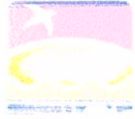
Riverkeeper urges the City Council and the Administration to take bold action now, and lead our city forward toward an equitable, climate ready future that reimagines our waterways as critical resources for recreation, ecological health, and climate adaptation. To accomplish this, we urge the City to include the above eight priorities in the FY27 Budget.

Thank you for your consideration of Riverkeeper's testimony. We look forward to continuing to work with the Council Members, DEP staff, and our partner organizations to create a climate resilient New York, restore our waterways, and increase access and swimming for New Yorkers in their natural waters.

Em Ruby, Advocacy Policy and Planning Coordinator · eruby@riverkeeper.org



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Save the Sound[®]
Action for our region's environment.

Public testimony of David Abreu from Save the Sound

March 19, 2026

**New York City Council Committee on Environmental Protection and Waterfronts
Preliminary Budgetary Hearing**

Submitted by David Abreu, Clean Water Advocacy Specialist, Save the Sound
Dabreu@savethesound.org, 347-712-0434

My name is David Abreu and I am the clean water advocacy specialist at Save the Sound. Thank you, Chair Gennaro, and members of the Environmental Protection and Waterfront Committee, for the opportunity to testify today. I am testifying today in support of the Rise to Resilience (R2R) Coalition, the SWIM Coalition, and our shared budget priorities for climate resilience and clean water solutions that protect New York City and Long Island Sound.

Save the Sound is a nonprofit organization working to protect and restore the entire Long Island Sound region. New York City is closely tied to the westernmost portion of the Long Island Sound encompassing parts of the Bronx and Queens. The waterways that make up the Western Narrows face significant water quality impairments that impact New Yorkers' ability to safely access their local bodies of water.

Our Long Island Sound Report Card provides science- and data-driven grades for water quality in the open waters of the Long Island Sound. Every year since 2008, the open waters of the Western Narrows have received an "F" grade. While there have been moderate improvements over time, climate change threatens to halt and potentially undo decades of progress.

Increasingly common heavy rain events exacerbate the impacts that stormwater and wastewater pollution have on our waterways. This is directly felt by New Yorkers who want to go swimming at local beaches in the summer. Save the Sound's 2025 Long Island Sound Beach Report graded over 200 public and private beaches around the Sound, and based on a three-year average of annual failure rates, wet weather fails across all LIS beaches **rose** from 11.0% (2020 to 2022) to 13.5% (2022 to 2024). The increase is due in part to the failure rate in the westernmost region of the Sound that combines Westchester County and New York City: 14.9% in 2020–2022, versus 20.8% in 2022–2024. Eight out of the twelve New York City beaches on LIS scored below a "B," with six of those scoring in the "D" range: Trinity Danish Young People's Society, White Cross Fish Club, American Turners, and Danish American Beach Club in the Bronx, Whitestone Booster and Douglas Manor Association Beach in Queens. This translates to more beach days lost to bacterial contamination closures or swim advisories because of heavy rain. Annual rainfall totals

are expected to continue increasing, as is the frequency and intensity of severe storms, a consequence of climate change that will impact water quality around the region. Additionally, rising temperatures worsen hypoxia in aquatic environments, suffocating wildlife and devastating ecosystems. **Bold investment is needed to ensure that the hard work done by the city to improve water quality conditions is not undone.**

New York City has witnessed the impacts of climate change on our residents, infrastructure, and natural resources. These impacts are no longer abstract or projections of the future. They are tangible, measurable, and unavoidable, but we know there are policies, plans, and funds that can reduce the burden of impact on New Yorkers. That starts with making critical investments in the City Budget for Fiscal Year 2027 toward a more resilient, equitable, and healthy future. This is especially vital during a time when investment from the federal government is uncertain, and leadership at every level is needed to take the steps necessary to reflect this priority across all agencies and through their budgeting processes.

Without investment, the financial costs of climate impacts will continue to be a burden to the City and to all New Yorkers. Studies estimate that the costs of climate change across New York will rise to \$10 billion annually by 2050. And yet, the costs of inaction are far greater: an estimated \$55 billion in the next decade for coastal storms and flood-event-related damages.

Save the Sound and our coalition partners recommend the following 5 budget priorities for FY27 to protect Long Island Sound and New York City:

- 1. Fully fund the Department of Environmental Protection at \$2 billion to address New York City's aging water infrastructure.**

This funding would support DEP's current infrastructure maintenance needs while enabling upgrades to stormwater management solutions, drinking water source protection, wastewater management, water quality improvements, and inland and coastal resiliency projects.

- 2. Reject the NYC Water Board rental payment in the FY27 budget and beyond.**

The water rental payment is a regressive tax on New Yorkers that originated at a time when there was substantial debt related to the water and sewage systems. The debt was paid off in 2004, making this payment unnecessary. The rental payment also takes funds generated by water ratepayers and transfers them to the City's general fund. These funds would support critical investments in water infrastructure rather than further straining the DEP budget. Save the Sound agrees with our coalition partners that a more equitable route would be to restructure water utility rates to consider the contribution to stormwater runoff. Currently, water rates do not capture the permeability or impermeability of surfaces. By separately and fairly categorizing stormwater runoff, the City will benefit from designated revenues for stormwater management, as well as the creation of incentive programs for green infrastructure and other strategies that reduce flooding events. In fact, the New York City Independent Budget Office released a research report on November 2023, which estimated that the City could receive revenue ranging from \$266 million

to \$892 million per year from a similar structure adopted by other major U.S. cities like Seattle, Baltimore, and Philadelphia¹.

3. Allocate long-term funding for the City's current portfolio of climate resilience projects, such as the Cloudburst Management and Bluebelt program, and expand funding for new projects such as Resilient Acquisitions

Save the Sound appreciated the 2023 expansion of the Cloudburst Program, which invested \$390 million at four new cloudburst sites throughout the City, including the Corona, Kissena, and Parkchester projects located within the Long Island Sound watershed. We urge expansion of the program as effective solutions for capturing stormwater and improving local community spaces. Additionally, we recommend expansion of the Bluebelt program as ecologically rich nature-based solutions for managing stormwater runoff. The successful implementation of a Bluebelt project on Staten Island, and the new projects at Kissena Park and Prospect Park, should be encouraging examples for the future possibility of innovative and cost-effective drainage solutions. Save the Sound and our coalition partners strongly support NYC DEP's efforts around these key programs and urge the city to allocate the appropriate funding to sustain and grow them.

4. Provide \$4 Million to fully fund implementation of the Unified Stormwater Rule.

The intentions of the Unified Stormwater Rule are aligned with a clean water future for New York City, yet DEP never received the additional staffing or funding required to implement this policy since it went city-wide in 2021. The result has been a longer timeline during the permitting approval process, slowing sustainable development that prioritizes green infrastructure and contributes to NYC's goals of reducing combined sewer overflow. By allocating \$4 million to the full implementation of the Unified Stormwater Rule, DEP can be supported through expanded permitting review and site inspection capacity. It is imperative that the Rule be strengthened through this investment because it is an important tool in ensuring properties are doing their part to maintain city water quality standards and address local flooding.

5. Fully fund the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice to complete the planning and engagement required to fulfill Local Laws 122 and 149 and develop a Five Borough Adaptation Plan.

There is an urgent need for comprehensive, long-term planning for climate resilience in New York City, which will dictate how funding can and should be spent. The Rise to Resilience coalition partners led the advocacy around Local Law 122, which established a Five Borough Climate Adaptation Plan to be led by the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice (MOCEJ). This plan should include recommendations for resilience and adaptation measures to protect residents, property, and infrastructure throughout the city. It would identify areas that are highly vulnerable to climate hazards to help determine where resiliency and adaptation measures should be prioritized. Now, after the recent passage of Local Law 149, this adaptation plan will be

¹ New York City Independent Budget Office (November 2023). *Raindrops Keep Falling On New York: Potential Implications Of a Stormwater Fee In New York City*. <https://www.ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/raindrops-keep-falling-on-new-york-potential-implications-of-a-stormwater-fee-in-new-york-city-november-2023.pdf>

completed as part of the City's longer term sustainability plan, PlaNYC. Save the Sound strongly urges MOCEJ to develop and publish a long-term climate adaptation plan.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and for your leadership in ensuring that New Yorkers are protected from the climate crisis while remaining able to access our natural resources like the Long Island Sound. Save the Sound, the Rise to Resilience coalition, and the SWIM Coalition, are eager to work with the City Council to advance these recommendations and partner in ensuring New Yorkers have access to safe and swimmable waters and a city resilient to the impacts of climate change.



New York City Council

Committee on Environmental Protection and Waterfronts Preliminary Budget Hearing
March 19th, 2026

Good afternoon. My name is Andrew Conca-Cheng, I am a Programs Manager at the Street Vendor Project (SVP) and lead our [Environmental Justice for Vendors, by Vendors program](#). Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

SVP is a membership-based organization that champions the rights of street vendors as small businesses to earn a living and contribute to the culture and life of New York City. SVP respectfully requests funding to sustain and expand the Environmental Justice for Vendors, by Vendors program. This program is a street vendor-led initiative to reduce the carbon footprint of New York City's food carts and trucks.

There are currently 6,000+ permitted food vending units in the city, and this number will expand in the coming years due to the passage of Intro 431. Virtually all food vending carts use fossil fuel generators, which emit harmful air and noise pollutants that negatively impact both the environment and vendor health. An NYU study showed that operating a generator for one hour creates the same Carbon Monoxide as driving a car for 234 miles. Yet vendors lack clear support to transition to affordable and healthier alternatives.

Since 2021, SVP has been engaging vendors and other stakeholders in a collaborative effort to identify more sustainable vending technology and proactively anticipate barriers to scalability and adoption. Through this process, we have identified and tested safe and clean batteries that are long-lasting enough to meet the needs of NYC vendors. We are currently electrifying a select number of food carts with clean battery alternatives. We also helped design and test tech that takes advantage of New York City's already-existing power infrastructure, including swappable e-bike batteries and charging stations.

Finally, we have worked closely with the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice to design [the City's first pilot project electrifying vendors](#), which we plan to implement this summer.

SVP respectfully requests \$300,000 in funding from the New York City Council to scale our environmental justice program through the following:

- Hire outreach specialists to staff the program and perform outreach, education, surveying, electricity usage measuring, and battery tests
- Expand our testing of zero-emission products to replace generators in food carts and trucks by testing batteries with at least 20 vendors
- Conduct community education and outreach in 7 languages to 500 vendors and 10 commissaries to promote and support vendors in transitioning to clean energy
- Assist in the implementation, vendor coordination, scalability planning, and evaluation of MOCEJ and City Parks Foundation's pilot electrifying vendors in and around NYC parks in partnership with stakeholders, experts, and interested elected officials
- Support battery companies in the designing, research, and development of battery products specific to serving New York City's street vendors
- Expand our coalition and create a shared understanding among stakeholders about the environmental impact of food carts and trucks and the alternative solutions that are reliable, resilient, and environmentally friendly

Thank you and we hope that that city supports us in achieving this vital environmental and public health goal.

Andrew Conca-Cheng

Programs Manager, Street Vendor Project at the Urban Justice Center



SWIM Coalition
Stormwater Infrastructure Matters

March 19, 2026

Testimony of Michelle A. Luebke

On behalf of Stormwater Infrastructure Matters (SWIM) Coalition

**Before the New York City City Council Committee on Environmental Protection and
Waterfronts**

at the Preliminary Budget Hearings.

Thank you for the opportunity to deliver public testimony on the SWIM Coalition's recommendations for the Preliminary Budget Hearings and thank you to Chair Gennarro and the rest of this committee for your work on behalf of environmental protection and ensuring clean water in NYC.

SWIM Coalition is a group of 70 organizations dedicated to ensuring swimmable and fishable waters around New York City through sustainable stormwater management practices – both green and grey infrastructure. SWIM Coalition member organizations endorse a truly sustainable view of watershed management, one that restores ecological systems, creates local economic opportunities and equitably distributes the benefits of green infrastructure. SWIM Coalition has long advocated for nature-based solutions to address flooding, stormwater, and climate resiliency, not only because green infrastructure has the capability to manage water in highly urbanized areas, but also because of the myriad co-benefits associated with greening our cities. The SWIM Coalition is part of and stands in agreement with the Rise to Resilience (R2R) Coalition, with many of the same priorities and recommendations for funding.

Climate change is causing ever-increasing threats to people and natural systems; as changes worsen, the most vulnerable populations in our urban areas are the ones to receive a disproportionate impact of climate and environmental injustices. Flooding, stormwater runoff, and combined sewage overflows (CSOs) impair water quality in New York City's waterways and impact human health. Projections from the New York State Climate Impact Assessments¹ indicate that total annual precipitation in NYC could increase by as much as 17% by 2100, leading to more street flooding for New Yorkers, more raw sewage being dumped into our waterways, and more damaging flooding of infrastructure across the city. New Yorkers have witnessed firsthand the risks and impacts that climate change poses to our residents,

¹ <https://nysclimateimpacts.org/explore-the-assessment/>



infrastructure, and natural resources. Flooding events are the most common climate-related hazard across the city² and nearly 14% of New Yorkers (~1.3 million people) live within or adjacent to the 100-year floodplain.³ Moreover, nearly 78% (~7.2 million New Yorkers) have an urban heat index (UHI) of 8°F or higher, meaning that people in those census tracts feel at least 8°F more heat because of the local built environment.⁴

New York City is under a Consent Order by NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to abate the more than 18 billion gallons per year (BGY) of CSOs from 398 outfalls⁵ by reducing 1.67 BGY of CSOs by 2040 and invest \$3.5 billion in GI citywide by 2045. GI has long been considered a pollution prevention practice by reducing the volume of rainwater entering the combined sewer system or removing pollutants in stormwater runoff. The multiple co-benefits of GI are also well established: air quality improvements, cooling effects, reduction in energy consumption, and creation of habitats are all extremely beneficial in a highly urbanized environment such as New York City. GI also can be effective in reducing climate-related threats and promoting climate and storm resilience, providing additional co-benefits to communities, but often barriers impede the adoption of GI, such as lack of funding and technical assistance.⁶

The SWIM Coalition, the Rise to Resilience Coalition, and our member groups strongly urge the City's budget reflect the current reality of climate change, which already affects millions of NYC residents today.

Climate risks and impacts are no longer abstract or projections of the future. They are tangible, measurable, and life-threatening. There are critical policies, plans, and funds that can help increase the city's sustainability and resiliency and reduce the burden of impact on New Yorkers, but direct and bold action must be taken immediately. That starts with making critical investments in the City Budget toward a more resilient, equitable future.

Climate resilience involves repairing, maintaining, and innovating physical infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, transportation, and buildings. It also involves expanding technical capacity within the local agencies with regards to risk mitigation, emergency management, and socioeconomic vulnerabilities in the face of observed and projected climate change impacts. Climate resilience efforts also include raising awareness through educational programs and campaigns. This cannot be tackled without explicit line items in the City's budget dedicated towards climate resilience programs. **Especially in the current context of federal rollbacks on climate regulation and funding, local leadership and funding on climate resilience cannot be**

² Rebuild by Design. *Atlas of Disaster: New York*.

<https://rebuildbydesign.org/atlas-of-disaster-new-york-state/>

³ Rebuild by Design. *Who Lives in the NYC Floodplain*.

<https://rebuildbydesign.org/reports/who-lives-in-the-nyc-floodplain-2/>

⁴ Climate Central (July 2023) *Urban Heat Spots*,

<https://www.climatecentral.org/climate-matters/urban-heat-islands-2023>

⁵ <https://dec.ny.gov/environmental-protection/water/water-quality/combined-sewer-overflow>

⁶ Choi, C., Berry, P., & Smith, A. (2021). The climate benefits, co-benefits, and trade-offs of green infrastructure: A systematic literature review. *Journal of environmental management*, 291, 112583.



lost or minimized. The time to prepare for climate change has been ongoing and the City has yet to take the critical steps necessary to reflect this priority across all agencies and through its budgeting processes.

Moreover, without investment, the financial costs of climate impacts will be a burden to the City and to all New Yorkers. **Studies estimate that the costs of climate change across New York will rise to \$10 billion annually by 2050.⁷ And yet, the costs of inaction are far greater. Studies estimate that the cost of inaction in the state will be \$55 billion in the next decade for coastal storms and flood-event-related damages.⁸**

The SWIM Coalition together with the Rise to Resilience Coalition recommend the following five priorities for clean water, environmental justice, and climate resilience in the FY27 budget:

- 1) **We strongly urge the City Council and the Administration to allocate an additional \$4 million for implementation of the Unified Stormwater Rule in the FY27 Budget.** The Unified Stormwater Rule (USWR) is absolutely critical to tackling inland flooding from extreme rainfall and meeting the city's non-negotiable regulatory requirements to reduce CSOs into waterways, **but the Rule is slowing down sustainable development due to a lack of staffing at DEP to support its implementation.** Funding for adequate staff is particularly important as the city considers expedited housing development. SWIM supports development of affordable housing that does not compromise the protection from flooding and stormwater pollution. When the Rule expanded from separately sewered areas of the city to include the combined sewer areas of the city, DEP never received additional staff or funding to staff the office. In order for the city to prepare communities for future extreme rainfall, and meet its regulatory requirements to reduce CSOs, additional funding is needed to ensure the USWR program is operating effectively. This \$4 million funding request includes \$3 million for 15 additional staff at DEP to support implementation of the Rule, including permit processing and site inspection to ensure compliance, as well as \$1 million for the development of a new application platform and 2 IT staff to maintain it. Together, this additional funding would significantly increase the effectiveness of the Rule while simultaneously reducing permitting timelines for development. Additionally, we would like to emphasize that the USWR would run more efficiently if DEP has more staff; the fee paid by the permittee should be spent on hiring DEP staff to administer the permits. The USWR is a strong defense against future flooding and must be preserved.
- 2) **Reject the water rental payment in the FY27 budget.** A major recurring concern in the FY27 budget is related to the water rental payment charge. The water rental payment is a

⁷ Rebuild by Design. *Resilient Infrastructure for New York State*.
<https://rebuildbydesign.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/1329.pdf>

⁸ Rebuild by Design. *Atlas of Disaster: New York*.
<https://rebuildbydesign.org/atlas-of-disaster-new-york-state/>



regressive tax that is based on an outdated agreement between the city and the Water Board made more than four decades ago. The payment was intended as repayment for a capital loan, which has been repaid in full, making this payment no longer necessary. The rental payment takes funds generated by water ratepayers and transfers them to the City's general fund. These funds are critical for supporting investments in water infrastructure. Forcing a payment upon the NYC Water Board further strains DEP's budget and handcuffs the City's ability to respond to climate change. A more equitable route would be to restructure water utility rates to consider the contribution to stormwater runoff. Currently, water rates do not capture the permeability or impermeability of surfaces. By separately and fairly categorizing stormwater runoff, the City will benefit from designated revenues for stormwater management, as well as the creation of an incentive program(s) for green infrastructure and other strategies that reduce flooding events.

- 3) **Allocate DEP's budget for the Bureau of Coastal Resilience in FY27 to \$10 million, of which \$5 million would support 45 new staff positions and \$5 million would go toward developing a compound flood model and other long-term planning efforts.** The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is responsible for upgrading critical drinking and stormwater infrastructure, as well as coastal resiliency infrastructure across New York City. We applaud the formation of a new Bureau of Coastal Resilience within DEP, as part of commitments made in the latest PlaNYC. The SWIM and Rise to Resilience coalitions strongly encourage the Council to introduce legislation to codify this office into permanent existence, and to lead the governance of coastal resiliency for the City. Given the large portfolio of this office, we are calling for the City to fund the office with adequate permanent staff.
- 4) **Allocate long-term funding for the City's current portfolio of climate resilience, such as the Cloudburst Management and Blubelt programs.** We applaud the 2023 expansion of the Cloudburst Program, investing \$390 million at four new sites. Future expansion of the program should not exclude at-risk communities with high water tables, as projects around the city, such as the Arverne East project in Rockaway, have proven green infrastructure to be effective in reducing the impact of intense rainfall despite the high water table. Additionally, we recommend expansion of the Bluebelt program, like the new projects at Kissena Park and Prospect Park. The Coalition strongly supports NYC DEP's Bluebelt Program, which preserves natural drainage corridors including streams, ponds, and wetlands, and enhances them to perform their functions of conveying, storing, and filtering runoff precipitation or stormwater. The program has been implemented successfully on Staten Island and we encourage the city to invest in the program across the boroughs so more neighborhoods can benefit.
- 5) **Fully fund the Mayor's Office of Climate and Environmental Justice (MOCEJ) to complete the planning and engagement required to fulfill Local Law 122 and 149, and**



develop a Five Borough Adaptation Plan. There is an urgent need for comprehensive, long-term planning for climate resilience in New York City, which will dictate how funding can and should be spent. The Five Borough Climate Adaptation Plan required under Local Law 122 should include recommendations for resilience and adaptation measures to protect residents, property, and infrastructure throughout the city. It would identify areas that are highly vulnerable to climate hazards to help determine where resiliency and adaptation measures should first be implemented. Now, after the recent passage of Local Law 149, this adaptation plan will be completed as part of the City's longer term sustainability plan, PlaNYC. The SWIM Coalition strongly urges the city to fully fund this effort so that MOCEJ can develop and publish a long-term climate adaptation plan.

Along with the Rise to Resilience Coalition, the SWIM Coalition advocates for practical solutions and for dedicated, long-term funding and planning for climate resilience for New York City. We strongly encourage the Council to allocate the necessary funding for stormwater resiliency in the City budget for FY27. Climate resilience funding, broadly, in FY26 is dangerously low. We look forward to working with the Council to expand the City's legislative, planning, and funding approach to stormwater resiliency.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this written testimony and for your work to ensure New Yorkers are protected from the impacts of the climate crisis. We appreciate the leadership of this Council in paving the way forward for our city toward an equitable, climate-ready future that reimagines our waterways and stormwater infrastructure as critical resources for human health, recreation, ecological health, and climate adaptation. The SWIM Coalition looks forward to partnering with the City Council to advance any and all of these recommendations and initiatives, and I am happy to discuss these items in more detail with you at any point.

Michelle A. Luebke | Program Manager

advocacy@swimmablenyc.org

On behalf of the SWIM Coalition Steering Committee:

Mike Dulong – Riverkeeper

Dara Illowsky – Save the Sound

Leonel Lima Ponce – Pratt Institute

Christian Murphy – Bronx River Alliance

Holly Porter Morgan – Lehman College

Em Ruby – Riverkeeper

Shino Tanikawa – NYC Soil & Water Conservation District





**Written Testimony on the Fiscal Year 2027 Preliminary Budget
New York City Council, Committee on Environmental Protection**

**Anais Reyes, Deputy Director at the Climate Museum
Testifying on behalf of the Climate Museum
March 19, 2026**

Greetings, Chair Gennaro and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Anais Reyes, and I am the Deputy Director at the Climate Museum. As you know, we are the first museum in the U.S. dedicated to climate change and climate action. We use arts and cultural programs to educate visitors about the climate crisis and offer ways for visitors to take civic and collective action. Since 2018—over the course of 18 exhibitions, 350+ events, and 180,000+ visitors—the Climate Museum has helped move people from feeling despair and isolation about this existential threat to feeling informed, connected, and empowered to act. Chair Gennaro and the committee have been advocates of the Museum since its early days, and recently passed a Resolution in support of the Museum. We are extremely proud of this Resolution and appreciative of your past and ongoing support.

The Climate Museum is currently in the early stages of building our permanent location. In December 2024, the Museum was selected by New York State as the cultural anchor of a large-scale, multi-use development project on the Far West Side of Manhattan set to open in 2030. As we work to design and build our future home, we are also beginning a capital campaign, fundraising for an interim exhibition space, and continuing to present public events with partner organizations.

I am here with an urgent request for the committee today: that you strengthen the civic fabric of New York City's cultural leadership by expressing your support for the Climate Museum—in particular through the Speaker's Initiative.

As previously mentioned, in December 2025, the Committee on Environmental Protection, Resiliency and Waterfronts passed a Resolution supporting the mission and growth of the Climate Museum. During the hearing, New Yorkers of all ages and backgrounds—organizational partners,

former high school interns, scientists, educators, artists, and more—shared their stories about how being a part of or experiencing the Museum’s work moved them. The resolution continues to play a major role in elevating The Climate Museum, and, again, we are deeply appreciative for this statement of support from the Committee and from Chair Gennaro.

Additionally, in FY26 we received our first Speaker’s Initiative Grant for \$100,000—a critical inflection point for the Museum as we seek to achieve eligibility for receipt of capital funds. This grant will allow us to present programs that keep us in dialogue with our community as we work toward our next exhibition and future home—including an Earth Day Concert in Times Square with the Broadway Green Alliance; a game show night hosted by drag queen and environmental activist Pattie Gonia; a book launch for climate leader and bestselling author Dr. Katharine Wilkinson; and a World Ocean’s Day concert in collaboration with the New York Climate Exchange, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, and the Met Orchestra Musicians. Now, our key strategic objective is to secure a Speaker’s Initiative grant of \$100,000 for the second year in a row in order to continue establishing eligibility to apply for capital funds from City Council, so that the Museum can continue to be an institution of, by, and for the people of New York City first and foremost, and to continue building our permanent home.

Through the Resolution and the support from the Speaker, the city council has not only lifted up arts and culture, but maintained and grown New York City’s position as a global leader on climate.

In 2025, the Climate Museum coauthored a peer-reviewed study with researchers from the George Mason University Center for Climate Change Communication. The study found that, after seeing our exhibition, visitors left more aware of just how much others are concerned about climate change, more hopeful that it can be solved, and more confident and more determined to speak out about it.¹ The Museum does the critical climate work of seeding a sense of agency and possibility in the public. This work lays the foundation for meaningful and sustained change.

As President Trump continues to maliciously attack public services, civil rights, and democracy itself, we all feel a sense of collective urgency. Now is the time to come together around an issue we are all concerned about. Now is the time for New York City to defend our values and stand as a symbol together for unwavering climate, cultural, and civic leadership.

Today, I am asking for your support in helping the Climate Museum continue to do this vital work. We have submitted a request as part of the Speaker’s Initiative and ask for your support with Speaker Menin and her team. We appreciate the past support we’ve received from the council and hope to have your continued partnership.

Thank you again for your support, for your time today, and for your service.

¹Nicholas Badullovich, Amanda Nesci, Miranda Massie, John Kotcher, Edward Maibach; “Communicating about ‘The End of Fossil Fuel’ in a museum setting: a mixed-methods investigation of the climate museum,” PLOS Climate, February 19 2025. <https://journals.plos.org/climate/article?id=10.1371/journal.pclm.0000518>



New York City Council Committee Preliminary Budget Hearing
Committee on Environmental Protection and Waterfronts
March 19, 2026

Testimony submitted on behalf of The Community Preservation Corporation

As the Mamdani Administration and the City Council work to finalize the City's FY27 budget, we urge prioritization of the increasingly tenuous financial and physical conditions of the City's rent-stabilized housing stock. There are roughly 1 million¹ rent stabilized apartments in New York City, accounting for 28% of the city's total housing stock and 44% of all rental units². Rent stabilization has helped keep the overall median rent well below typical market-rate levels, providing affordable homes for over 2 million New Yorker renters. But, while rents may be stabilized, the costs of maintaining and operating these buildings are not. Insurance, costs of labor and materials for repairs, and utility bills keep rising.

Between 2020 and 2024, CPC saw per-unit operating expenses rise 22% across our rent-stabilized NYC loan portfolio; insurance and administrative costs each climbed more than 50% during that period while utilities grew a cumulative 21%. Despite these cost increases, pathways to modest revenue growth remain tightly constrained by regulatory agreements subject to approved rent increases determined annually by the Rent Guidelines Board. This creates a fundamental mismatch for affordable properties: when expenses grow faster than revenues, owners lack viable pathways to close that gap. As shown by the only expense line to experience flat or negative growth in the past three years, owners in this position may choose to defer routine repairs and maintenance to mitigate financial distress, but this can quickly lead to physical distress and decreased housing quality.

Key to a financially healthy building is the ability to accurately predict expenses, which has become increasingly difficult to do as water, sewer, and utility prices continue to rise erratically. Due in large part to the costs of addressing the aging system's infrastructure needs, water and sewer rates rose 8.5% in 2024, the steepest increase in ten years. This sharp increase reflects the growing capital needs of the city's water system, including ongoing repairs to century-old water mains, upgrades to wastewater treatment facilities, and investments in climate resilience measures. While the New York City Water Board approved a more modest 3.7% increase for FY2026, even this represents costs rising faster than allowable rent increases. More concerning, higher increases are anticipated in coming years as infrastructure needs continue to intensify and capital investment requirements grow. For rent-stabilized buildings with capped revenues, what

¹ <https://citylimits.org/does-that-building-have-stabilized-apartments-itll-soon-be-easier-to-know/>

² <https://www.nytimes.com/article/rent-stabilized-apartments-nyc.html#:~:text=There%20are%20roughly%201%2C006%2C000%20rent%2Dstabilized%20apartments%20in,that%20rent%20at%20below%20the%20market%20rate>



might seem like modest annual utility increases are creating significant budget pressure. The University Neighborhood Housing Program (UNHP)³, who has been leading advocacy efforts about water rates for affordable housing for the past 30 years, estimates that without a change in policy, water payments will be \$2,000 per unit per year by 2030, leaving affordable housing buildings in a perilous position.

We advise the Council to advance solutions that help distressed affordable and rent stabilized buildings manage water and utility expenses responsibly while continuing to provide quality housing to their residents. Efforts should be made to provide greater predictability around annual rate increases, and the public sector should support backstop interventions to aid buildings struggling to cover their water and utilities costs. The Multi-Family Water Assistance Program provides a \$250 per apartment per year credit towards an eligible building's water bill and delivers crucial support for around 70,000 households. However, the program is typically over-subscribed, leaving eligible households to be turned away, and the credit amounts, while helpful, are often insufficient and have not been increased since the program began over a decade ago. We urge the Council to increase the Multi-Family Water Assistance Program per-apartment credit from the current \$250 to \$500 per apartment per year. To fund this change, we urge the Council to increase the Multi-Family Water Assistance Program budget to \$100 million to serve a total of 200,000 apartments in the program.

Addressing the financial and physical needs of New York City's distressed affordable housing demands action across multiple fronts and we urge the Committee on Environmental Protection and Waterfronts to act such that no building, nor their tenants, will face worsening housing quality due to the runaway costs of providing basic services. Thank you.

About The Community Preservation Corporation (CPC)

The Community Preservation Corporation (CPC) is a nonprofit affordable housing and community revitalization company that was formed in the early 1970s to help New York City and State restore and rebuild communities which were devastated by disinvestment. Today, CPC uses its more than fifty years of expertise in housing finance and public policy to expand access to quality housing, drive down the costs of affordable housing production, advance diversity and equity within the affordable housing development industry, and finance the construction of energy efficient housing. Since our founding, CPC has invested over \$16 billion to finance the creation and preservation of more than 276,000 units of affordable and workforce housing through our lending and investing platforms. CPC serves as a permanent lending partner to the New York City Retirement Systems and the New York State Common Retirement Fund, and we are also the servicer of a portion of the rent stabilized multifamily loan portfolio formerly held by Signature Bank, which includes just under 35,000 units of housing across New York City, where we are working diligently to preserve the physical quality and financial stability of that critical portion of the housing stock. For more information, visit www.communitycp.com

³ <https://unhp.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Every-Nickel-Counts-Report-1.pdf>

University Neighborhood Housing Program

2751 Grand Concourse, Bronx, NY 10468

www.unhp.org

Testimony of University Neighborhood Housing Program for the NYC Council Committee on Environmental Protection and Waterfronts

March 19, 2026

Submitted by Brendan Mitchell, UNHP Director of Real Estate and Finance and Jim Buckley, UNHP Executive Director

The “Every Nickel Counts” report <https://unhp.org/publications/every-nickel-counts-recommendations-to-preserve-distressed-affordable-multifamily-housing/> is University Neighborhood Housing Program’s (UNHP) most recent effort to highlight critical issues that affect the operation and preservation of affordable housing and contribute to the increased financial distress in affordable multifamily housing. Decent, affordable housing for thousands of low-income New Yorkers is currently at risk. This campaign report offers recommendations that could improve the financial and physical conditions of affordable housing in the short and long term for both residents and operators of affordable housing. The recommendations arise from UNHP's direct experience managing our own 1,216-unit portfolio, informed by our collaboration with a group of mission-driven for-profit and non-profit Bronx Building Operators who together oversee over 20,000 units. One of the key recommendations addresses rising water and sewer charges.

If there are no changes in policy and anticipated increases in water and sewer charges are realized in the next several years, the cost of water in multifamily buildings in DEP's Multifamily Conservation Program will be nearing \$2,000 per apartment per year in FY2030. The larger increases are due to rising capital costs of the water system and the previous mayoral administration’s decision to re-commence collecting a rental payment from the NYC Water Board. This decision resulted in nearly \$300 million of the charges collected from ratepayers being sent to the City’s general operating budget. This has contributed to the recent increases in water and sewer charges and has placed the system on a track with projected 7-8.5% increases over the next several years, as shown on p. 43 of the NYC Municipal Water Finance Authority Fiscal 2026 Bond.

UNHP’s Building Indicator Project (BIP) shows the impact: water liens increased 126.8% from 2019 Q1 to 2025 Q1, with nearly one-third (32%) of multifamily properties tracked in BIP carrying debt in 2025 Q3.

We are making the following recommendations to DEP and the City Council Committee on Environmental Protection and Waterfronts:

UNHP is urging the City to reverse the previous administration's decision to collect the full rental payment from the water system, which last year resulted in nearly \$300 million being paid to the City's general operating fund. This move would result in substantially lower annual rate increases charged to all rate payers by the NYC Water Board.

And to assist, affordable housing throughout the City, we are urging several changes in the Multi-family Water Assistance Program, which was implemented in FY 2017-18 and offered a \$250 per apartment per year credit towards an eligible building's water bill. The NYC Water Board and DEP originally allocated \$10 million to the program, and in the most recent year, the Water Board increased the allocation to \$16.25 million, which means up to 68,000 apartments can be assisted. The Area Median Income (AMI) guideline for the program is 60% of AMI; the program prioritizes projects from lowest to highest AMI; the program is typically over-subscribed; due to the volume of applications, the AMI cutoff last year was roughly 37%. For a building to be eligible, there must be an ACRIS-recorded regulatory agreement with a minimum of 15 years remaining in its restriction period. Additionally, the building cannot owe any money on its water and sewer bill.

With the steadily increasing operating costs in buildings and the sinking Net Operating Income in many of these buildings, we are proposing the following changes in the program:

- Increasing the per-apartment assistance to \$500 per apartment (the current \$250 per unit has not been increased since the start of the program in 2015, while operating costs have been rising and Net Operating Income (NOI) has been declining)
- Increasing the budget of the program to \$100 million, which would allow 200,000 apartments to be included in the program.
- Revising the regulatory agreement term requirement to 3 years.

THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL

Committee on Environmental Protection and Waterfronts

James F. Gennaro, Chair | Members: Harvey Epstein, Kamillah Hanks, Lincoln Restler, and Justin E. Sanchez

Hearing: Thursday, March 19, 2026, 12:30 pm | 12:30 AM 250 Broadway - 8th Floor - Hearing Room 3

Agenda Item: T2026-1371 — Budget and Oversight Hearing - FY27 Preliminary Budget

Chair Gennaro and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to speak.

My name is Alicia Grullón. I am an artist, professor, and writer, a lifelong Bronxite, daughter of immigrants from the Dominican Republic, and a parent raising a family in an unforgiving economy. I am also a community gardener deeply committed to the future of New York City's green spaces.

I remember Hurricane Sandy and Hurricane Katrina. Many of our young people do not—but those events remind us how quickly climate disaster becomes a lived reality.

During the pandemic, I collaborated with Black and brown women and queer gardeners, artists, and organizers in Kingsbridge to transform an abandoned park into a space for grieving, healing, and learning. As food apartheid deepened, we partnered with City Harvest and organized mutual aid—distributing culturally relevant food, PPE, and education while restoring land and supporting public health.

The Parks Department eventually shut down our garden. That experience showed me how vulnerable these spaces are—and how essential collective advocacy is.

Community gardens, rooted in movements of the 1970s, have long been acts of survival, stewardship, and community governance. Today, they remain vital climate infrastructure—absorbing water, cooling neighborhoods, and sustaining community life.

I propose a Percent for Green policy, modeled after Local Law 65 Percent for Art, to allocate a small percentage of publicly funded construction budgets toward community gardens, bioswales, trees, and local stewardship networks.

These spaces are not amenities—they are essential climate infrastructure. New Yorkers in environmental justice communities have been doing this work for decades. We just haven't funded it.

Environmental justice is not abstract. It is about whether our homes are safe, our neighborhoods flood, and our children can breathe clean air. Investing in green space is climate protection. How much we love this city will be measured by how much we protect the land and communities that sustain it.

Thank you.

LOCAL LAWS
OF
THE CITY OF NEW YORK
FOR THE YEAR 1982

No. 65

Introduced by Council Member Sadowsky (by request of the Mayor) and Council Members Dryfoos, Greitzer and Stern; also Council Members Messinger, Michels and Wallace—

A LOCAL LAW

**To amend the New York City Charter, in relation to providing
for works of art in public buildings.**

Be it enacted by the Council as follows:

Section 1. Chapter nine of the New York city charter is amended by adding a new section two hundred thirty-four, to read as follows:

§ 234. Works of art. a. As used in this section the term "works of art" includes all forms of the visual arts conceived in any medium, material or combination thereof.

b. Works of art shall be provided for each capital project which involves the construction or the substantial reconstruction of a city-owned public building or structure the intended use of which requires that it be accessible to the public generally or to members of the public participating in, requiring or receiving programs, services or benefits provided thereat. For the purposes of this section a police precinct house and a firehouse shall be deemed to be such buildings.

c. An amount not less than one per cent of the first twenty million dollars and one-half of one per cent of any amount in excess of twenty million dollars of capital funds appropriated by the city for each such capital project, other than funds appropriated for the acquisition of real property, shall be allocated for works of art provided, however, that this section shall in no case require the expenditure of more than four hundred thousand dollars for works of art for any capital project; nor more than the sum of one and one-half million dollars for works of art in any fiscal year. The mayor

may exempt a capital project from the provisions of this section if in his sole judgment the inclusion of works of art as provided hereby would be inappropriate.

d. Reasonable advance notification of the intention to include works of art in a project shall be provided to the appropriate district council member, council-members-at-large, borough president and chairperson of the community board of the district in which the project is located. All such works of art shall be subject to the approval of the art commission pursuant to section eight hundred fifty-four of this charter.

e. The mayor shall adopt rules and regulations to implement the provisions of this section.

§ 2. This local law shall take effect immediately and shall apply to any capital project for which the scope of project is submitted for approval on or after January first, nineteen hundred eighty-two.

THE CITY OF NEW YORK, OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK, s. s.:

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true copy of a local law of The City of New York, passed by the Council on October 14, 1982, and approved by the Mayor on October 29, 1982.

DAVID N. DINKINS, City Clerk, Clerk of the Council.

CERTIFICATION PURSUANT TO MUNICIPAL HOME RULE LAW SECTION 27

Pursuant to the provisions of Municipal Home Rule Law Section 27, I hereby certify that the enclosed local law (Local Law 65 of 1982, Council Int. 1093-A) contains the correct text and:

Received the following vote at the meeting of the New York City Council on October 14, 1982:

29 FOR 7 AGAINST 1 NOT VOTING

Was approved by the Mayor on October 29, 1982.

Was returned to the City Clerk on October 29, 1982.

FREDERICK A. O. SCHWARZ, JR., Corporation Counsel.

Good afternoon, Chair Gennaro and members of the Committee.

My name is Angela Kravtchenko. I am a District Leader, AD46 (Coney Island, Brighton Beach, and a part of Bay Ridge, and a member of the Land Use Committee for my local Community Board. I am testifying today on my own behalf regarding the Preliminary Budget for the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

In Coney Island, we are seeing a dangerous disconnect between the City's aggressive housing goals and the actual capacity of our underground infrastructure. We are currently building in flood zones based on outdated elevation data, while our sewers and water mains are already at a breaking point. We cannot keep 'planning' in a vacuum.

I strongly urge the Council to ensure the FY2027 Budget includes full funding for the Infrastructure Risk Score system proposed in Int. 0045-2026. Specifically, we need the DEP to have the resources to:

Conduct the site-specific stress tests mandated by this bill.

Coordinate directly with the Department of City Planning to ensure that no new density is approved in areas where the infrastructure risk score is 'High' or 'Critical'.

Commissioner Sherman has stated that planning is not an abstract exercise. There is nothing more concrete than a flooded basement or a collapsed water main. We need this budget to reflect a 'Resiliency First' approach. Don't just fund the pipes; fund the data that tells us where it is safe to build.

Our community is not 'anti-growth,' but we are 'anti-catastrophe.' Please fund the infrastructure risk studies so we can grow safely.

Thank you.

Angela Kravtchenko

My name is Grace Lindsay Merel and I am an NYC resident and professor who studies and teaches about climate change. I am testifying today in support of the Rise to Resilience (R2R) Coalition and their budget priorities for climate resilience solutions for New York City.

It is common for governments at all levels to prioritize short-term issues with visible outcomes. Unfortunately, climate change is a long-term problem that will, in the coming years, months, and decades, devastate our city in small ways and big if important precautions are not taken. The R2R coalition understands the nature of this problem and is proposing important and reasonable budgetary solutions.

We must act now before the next natural disaster creates further irreparable damage to our city.

March 19, 2026
New York City Council Committee on Environmental Protection and Waterfronts
Preliminary Budget Hearing

Submitted by Marta Teegen, Brooklyn Resident

Thank you, Chair Gennaro and Members of the Committee, for your leadership and for the opportunity to submit written testimony.

I am writing in support of the Rise to Resilience (R2R) Coalition and the SWIM Coalition, and their budget priorities for climate resilience and clean water solutions in New York City. I strongly urge the City's budget to reflect the reality that climate change is already here, and that critical investments in climate and water infrastructure are essential to ensuring New Yorkers are prepared.

New York City has already witnessed firsthand the risks and impacts that climate change poses to our residents, infrastructure, and natural systems. Flooding events are the most common climate-related hazard across the city, and nearly 14 percent of New Yorkers—approximately 1.3 million people—live within or adjacent to the 100-year floodplain. Moreover, nearly 78 percent of New Yorkers (about 7.2 million people) live in areas with an urban heat index of 8°F or higher, meaning residents experience significantly elevated temperatures due to the built environment.

These risks are no longer abstract projections. They are tangible and measurable. While some impacts are no longer avoidable, we know that strategic policies, planning, and funding can significantly reduce the burden on New Yorkers.

To reduce the city's vulnerability to climate change, bold and immediate action is required. This begins with making meaningful investments in the City budget to support a more resilient, equitable, and healthy future.

To that end, I urge the Council to support the following critical priorities in this year's budget:

- Fully fund the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) at \$2 billion
- Restore agency staffing to pre-COVID levels and fill approximately 800 vacancies
- Reject the \$313 million rental payment from the NYC Water Board
- Allocate \$10 million for DEP to complete a comprehensive Stormwater Master Plan
- Provide \$4 million to fully implement the Unified Stormwater Rule
- Allocate \$10 million to fully staff the Bureau of Coastal Resiliency, including:
 - \$5 million to support approximately 45 new staff positions
 - \$5 million for development of a compound flood model and long-term planning efforts
- Provide sustained, long-term funding for existing resilience programs, including Cloudburst Management, the Bluebelt program, and stewardship of the City's 30,000 acres of parkland, while also expanding funding for new initiatives such as Resilient Acquisitions

At this moment, we are also facing unprecedented federal rollbacks affecting climate mitigation, clean air and water protections, and environmental justice efforts. This makes local leadership even more critical.

New York City must act decisively to ensure that adequate funding and resources are directed toward protecting our ecosystems and preparing our communities for the realities of climate change.

Housing and affordability remain urgent priorities—but they cannot be addressed in isolation. It will not matter how many new homes we build if our infrastructure cannot withstand flooding and extreme weather. Without resilient systems in place, large parts of our city will become increasingly uninhabitable.

Thank you for your consideration.

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

[]

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: 3/19/26

(PLEASE PRINT)
Name: Cecilia Ellis

Address: _____ NY 11103

I represent: New York Public Interest Research Group NYPIRG

Address: 9 Murray St

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)
Name: Audie Soucy

Address: _____

I represent: New York Lawyers for the Public Interest

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: 03/19/2026

(PLEASE PRINT)
Name: Jakob France

Address: 240 Mercer St, New York NY 10012

I represent: NYC Law. WRDC

Address: _____

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 3/19/2026

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: CHRISTOPHER HASELMAN

Address: [REDACTED] WILSON ST

I represent: FEED FORM

Address: DAVID S BROADWAY

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Syrah Sutt

Address: 144-32 153rd Street

I represent: Nahmad Chen Miller Collectiv-

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 3/19/2026

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tyler Tabh

Address: _____

I represent: Waterfront Alliance

Address: 256 W 36 Street, New York, NY 10018

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 3/19/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Nerissa Moray

Address: Chief Financial Officer

I represent: DEP

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 3/19/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Beth DeFalco

Address: Deputy Commissioner

I represent: DEP

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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in favor in opposition

Date: 3/19/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: LISA GARCIA

Address: Commissioner

I represent: DEP

Address: _____

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**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 3/19/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Tasos Georgelis

Address: Chief Operating Officer

I represent: DEP

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: JAKOB FRANCO

Address: _____

I represent: NYU SCHOOL OF LAW ENVIRONMENTAL
LAW CLINIC

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: David Abreu

Address: _____

I represent: Save the Sound

Address: _____

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**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: 3/19/26

Name: Alia Scamro (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: _____

I represent: NY League of Conservation

Address: Voters

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

Name: ERIC A. GOLDSTEIN (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 40 WEST 20 ST

I represent: NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE

Address: COUNCIL

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. Budget Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

Name: Angela DeLillo (PLEASE PRINT)

Address: 933 Pease St

I represent: NYC DEP

Address: Letrak - Horace Ad

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**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Anastasios Georgis

Address: _____

I represent: DEP

Address: 59-17 Junction Blvd. Flushing NY 11373

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: NERISSA MORAY

Address: 297 State St

I represent: DEP

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____

in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Albert Klamer

Address: [REDACTED] NY, NY 10038

I represent: DEP

Address: 59-17 Junction Blvd 13th Floor Elmhurst

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**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

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 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Paul RUSH

Address: DEF

I represent: _____

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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 in favor in opposition

Date: 03/19/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Mackenzie Scheuermann

Address: [REDACTED] Stamford, CT 06901

I represent: Riverkeeper

Address: 20 Secor Rd. Ossining NY

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

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I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. Budget Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: 3/19/26

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Brendan Cheney

Address: _____

I represent: NY Housing Conference

Address: _____

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: 3/19/2026

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Pete Malinowski
Address: 778 Madison Street Brooklyn, NY
I represent: Billion Oyster Project
Address: _____

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**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Richard Leigh
Address: _____, NYC 10025
I represent: Food & Water Watch
Address: Same

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: March 19, 2026

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: Alicia Grullón

Address: Bronx, NY 10463

I represent: myself

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms

**THE COUNCIL
THE CITY OF NEW YORK**

Appearance Card

I intend to appear and speak on Int. No. _____ Res. No. _____
 in favor in opposition

Date: _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name: _____

Address: _____

I represent: _____

Address: _____

Please complete this card and return to the Sergeant-at-Arms